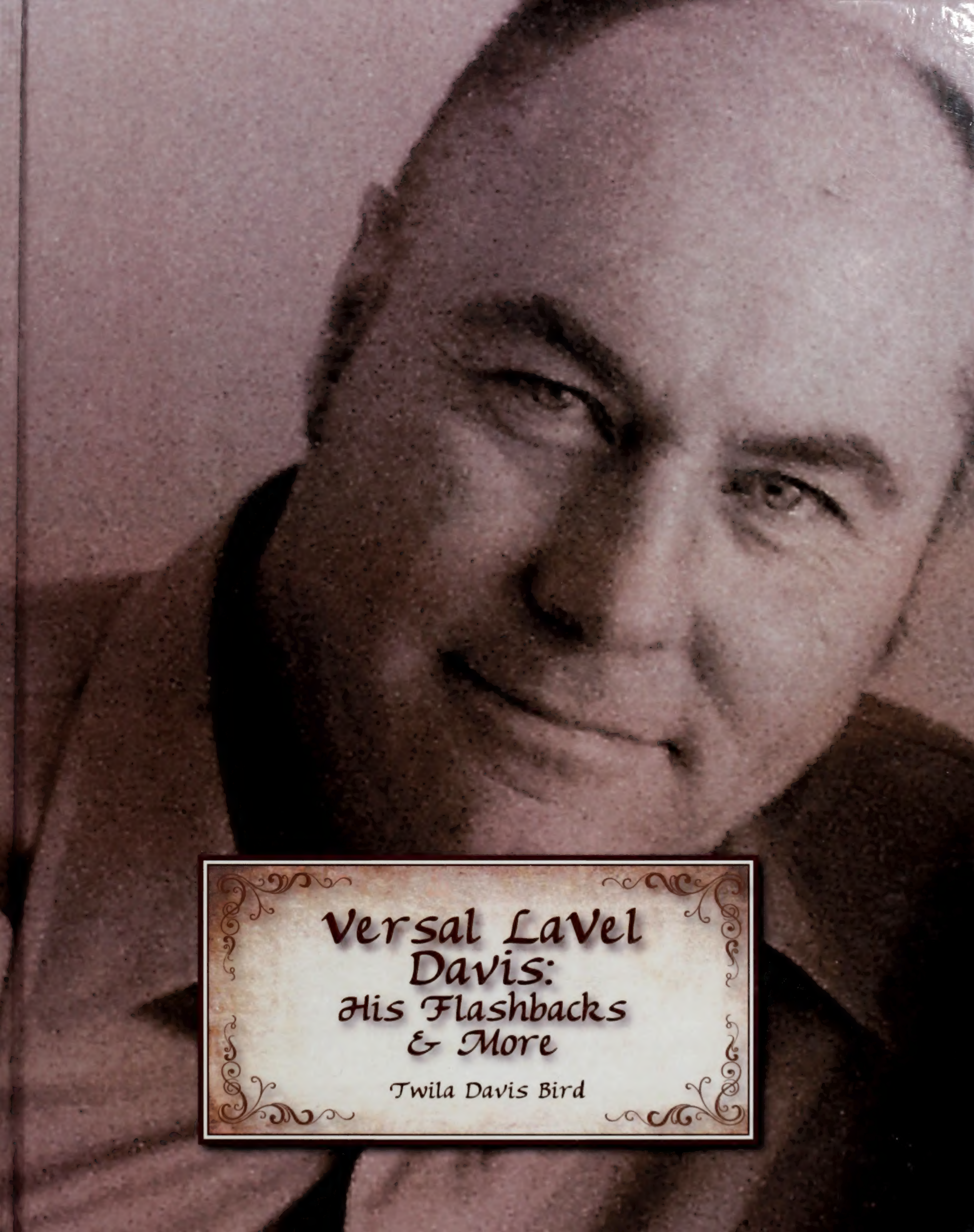


Versal LaVel Davis:
His Flashbacks & More

Twila Davis Bird

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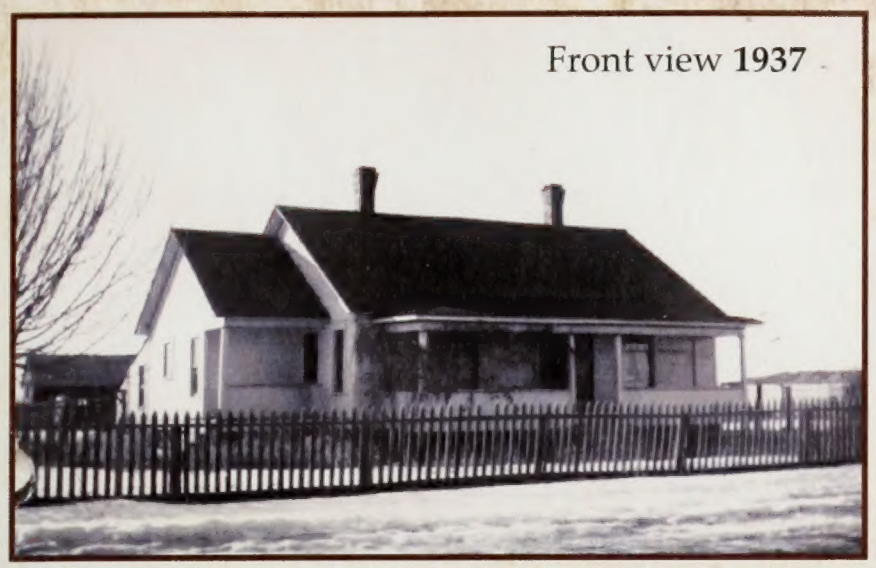
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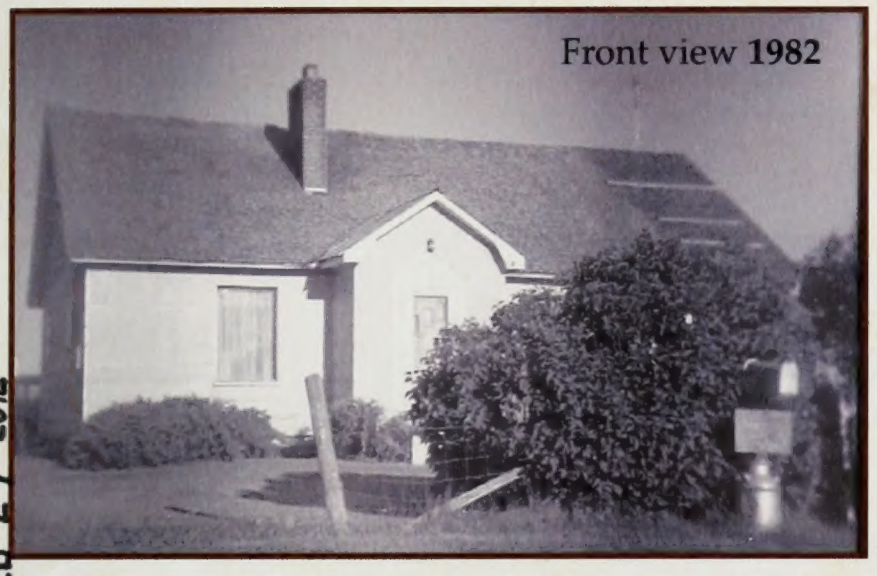
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Davis Ranch 1937-2008

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Front view **1937**


Back view **1937**


Front view **1982**

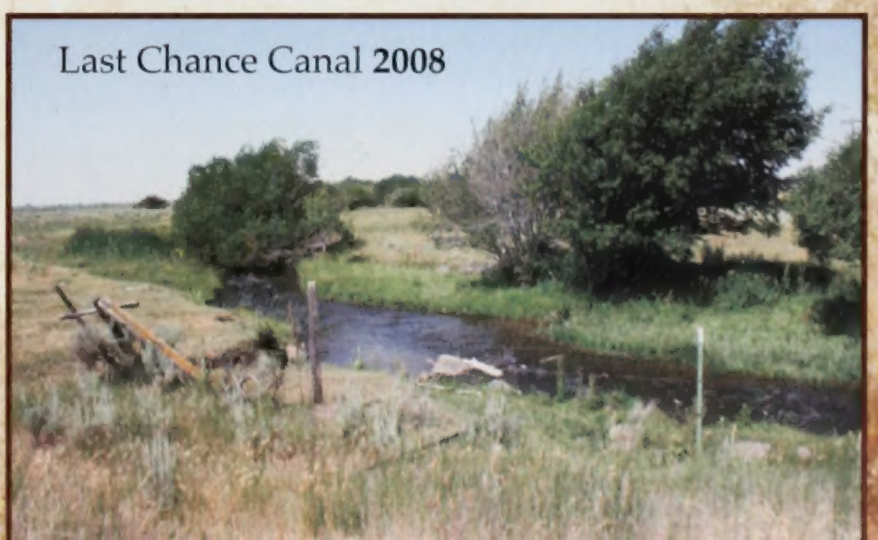

Back view **1982**

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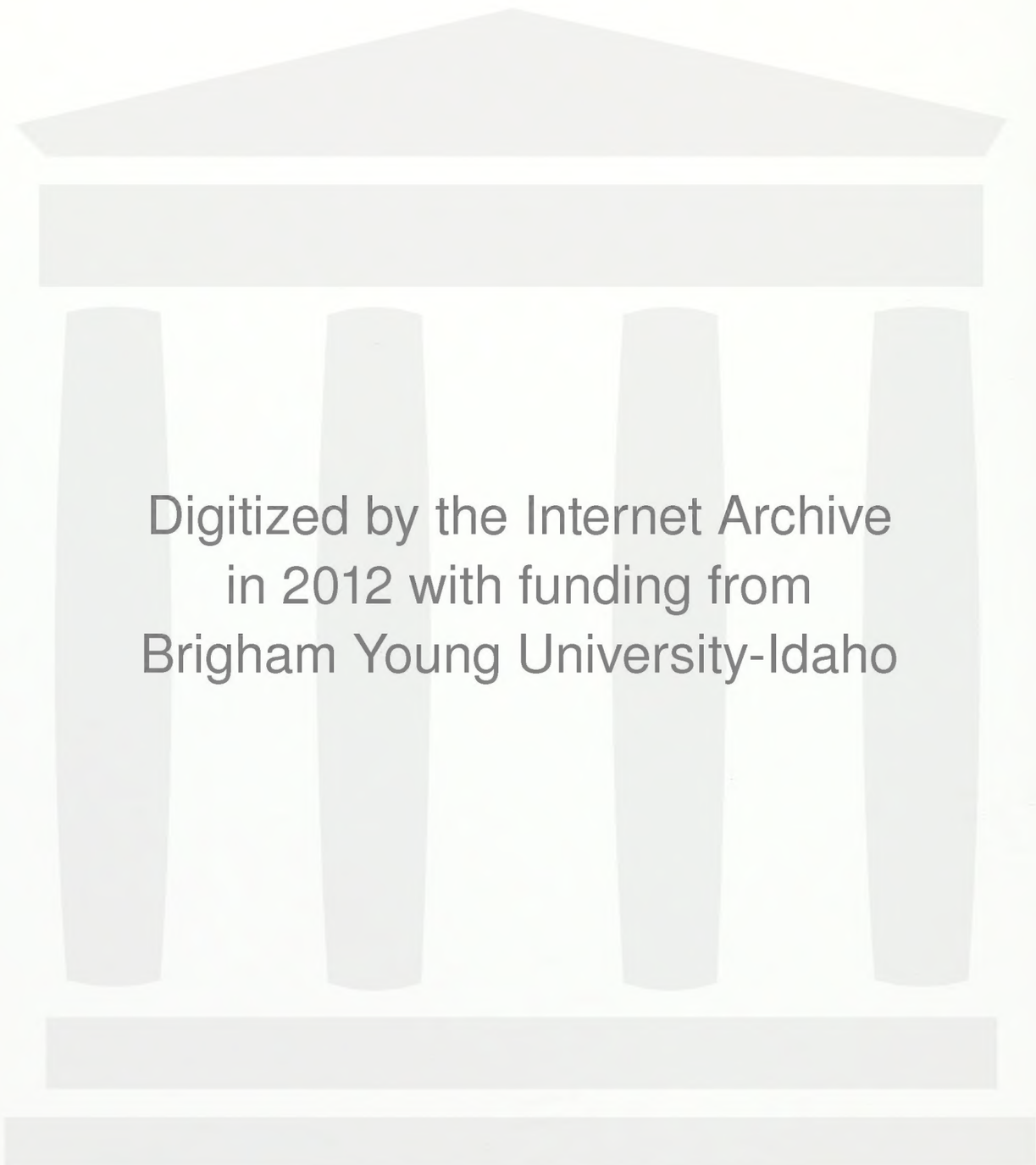

1988


2008


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Last Chance Canal **2008**

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Versal LaVel Davis:

His Flashbacks & More

Twila Davis Bird

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Photographs: Unless otherwise noted, all photographs in this book are from the Versal and Thelma Davis collection and are currently in the possession of their daughter, Twila Davis Bird.

Photo front cover: Versal LaVel Davis, 1972

Photo below: Versal's signature in cement at the Davis ranch two miles north of St. Anthony, Idaho, 1992.

Sometime during the early to mid 1940s Versal poured cement for a walkway leading from the front steps of his ranch home to Sand Creek Road, bordering the front fence. Before it set Versal neatly wrote "V. L. DAVIS" in the wet cement. This photo of his cement signature was taken fifty years later in 1992. The walkway, along with Versal's signature, has since been replaced.



For Dad

my children,
extended family,
and countless Davis kin
who will follow


With My
Fondest
Love
"36"

Contents

VLD

Contents	vii
Preface	viii
One: Boyhood Memories (1915-1927)	2
Two: Me 'N Dutch	46
Three: As a Teen (1927-1937)	68
Four: Early Ranch Life (1937-1941)	92
Five: War Years (1941-1947)	116
Six: St. Anthony Years (1947-1952)	146
Seven: Early Logan Years (1952-1966)	170
Eight: Alaska (1966, 1974, 1984 & 1986)	206
Nine: Mid-Life in Logan (1966-1980)	230
Ten: Our Mission (Aug. 1980-Dec. 1981)	272
Eleven: Our Older Years (1981-1985)	322
Twelve: Bessie and Me (1985-1989)	360
Thirteen: Reflections	392
Fourteen: VLD History	412
Supplemental Information	452
Chapter Notes	462
Sources	432
Flashbacks, Topics & Artwork Index	476
General Index	480

Left: A portrait of Versal, which he signed and embroidered for Thelma when they were dating, 1936.

Preface

VLD

Dad taught me how to fish. Our family trips to Yellowstone Park were mainly fishing expeditions and early on he made sure each of us knew how to properly bait a hook, cast properly, and reel in a fish. He also taught us how to gut what we caught but that's where my excitement for fishing came to an abrupt halt. Dad told me I couldn't fish if I didn't clean what I caught but I remained adamant. No way! Brusk on the outside but soft on the inside, he relented. I happily fished. He begrudgingly gutted.

An avid outdoorsman, Dad's tutoring wasn't limited to our Yellowstone trips. He also taught me how to fly fish in the river up Logan Canyon. I remember his approval as I whipped the line across the water, flicking the fly in just the right spot — a deep, dark fishing hole where the big ones rested next to the bank on the opposite side of the river. His obvious pleasure boosted my self confidence. I felt his approval not only for my fledgling fishing skills but for my general development as well. I knew Dad loved me though he rarely said so in words.

As he grew older Dad softened and expressed his love more freely. By the time of his death in 1989, he was a genuine softie with a deep, abiding desire to communicate his love for all eight of us in a permanent form. During the last decade of his life he wrote what he called "Flashbacks," which not only chronicled individual experiences in his life, but also expressed his love for his family. In this volume I've taken most of Dad's Flashbacks — they're marked as such — and have interwoven them among portions of his and Mom's letters, journal entries, and notes to form a somewhat chronological biography of his life. I've also added personal reminiscences of his children and grandchildren.

In 1989, only months before Dad's death, my sister, Deb, illustrated fourteen of Dad's Flashbacks with whimsical, humorous drawings — her trademark. When she mailed them to me from her home in Texas, she wrote in an accompanying letter, dated 9 Feb. 1989, *"Enclosed are the 14 sketches of Dad's flashbacks that I finally completed. . . . Dad was here for 10 days last month, and he saw the first six and laughed until he cried. I really want to do these for him; he was so pleased."* Deb's drawings are a delightful addition to this volume. Also included is Dad's handwritten autobiography.

To insure the reader can readily identify the main sources of information in this biography, I've put **Dad's "voice" in brown** and **Mom's in maroon. Everything else is in black.**

I compiled this book as a tribute to Dad. I know beyond the veil he's thrilled his written legacy is preserved and is being distributed in such a permanent form. I dearly hope it will be of lasting value to those who read it.

When I married, my fishing days came to an end. My husband, Richard, wasn't a fisherman. Although I haven't fished in almost fifty years, my memories of Dad's tutoring — of Dad's lifelong love for me — remain fresh. Dad, I love you, too.

Twila Davis Bird



This page: Me (Twila, age 14) fishing in Yellowstone Lake, 1962. I'm wearing Mom's hip boots. (Dad probably took the photo.)

Opposite page: Dad, dressed and ready for a few hours of fishing in Yellowstone National Park, 1958. That's me, age 10, in the center and Mom in the car.



Versal LaVel Davis, b. 18 Oct. 1915

Chapter One

Boyhood Memories

1915-1927

Versal was the third, twelve-pound baby born to tall, slender Alice Davis. He entered life with a dusky skin tone, which soon faded to a natural color. However, after seeing his dark-skinned little brother for the first time, thirteen-year-old Warren nicknamed him "Dark." It stuck! Dark became the name most of his close relatives and early friends called him during their lifetimes[2] — all except Thelma Hall, his future wife, who misunderstood the name, Dark, when she first heard it and called him "Dork," instead.[3] Dork was Mom's intimate name for Dad until her dying day.

Even Alice, Versal's mother, had a difficult time getting his name right but for different reasons. Wanting to honor Dr. W. B. West, the doctor who had delivered her new son, Alice told him they would like to give their baby the name "West" as a middle name with Versal as his first name. However, it seems Dr. West got a little carried away for he listed only the name West on the birth certificate, leaving off "Versal" completely. The certificate read simply "West Davis."

When their new baby was blessed in the St. Anthony Ward on 5 Dec. 1915, two months later, Gould pronounced the full name of Versal West Davis as the baby's complete name, which is how it appears on the church blessing certificate. Then, at some point, Dr. West must have fallen out of favor with the Davis family for Gould and Alice later amended Versal's church records and replaced his middle name, "West," with "LaVell." But even that appelation suffered further revision when his parents dropped one of the "l"s in his middle name, rendering it finally as "LaVel."

Except for these name glitches during his infancy, Dad was known throughout his life as Versal LaVel Davis. To his utter surprise, however, when he approached retirement and filed for social security benefits, he discovered his name had been recorded as "West Davis" by the government for over 60 years.

"So I submitted suitable documents for the purpose," he wrote in 1977, *"and finally after 61 years I now can claim a name, which matches most of my records of my later life."*[6]



Photo courtesy Dean Davis

Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis and her sons Floyd (left) and Wayne (known as "Pat" — another name saga), in about 1913 or 14, a year or two before Versal's birth.

Dad wrote in his 1977 autobiography:

In his history of his father, Gould Davis, *he added:*

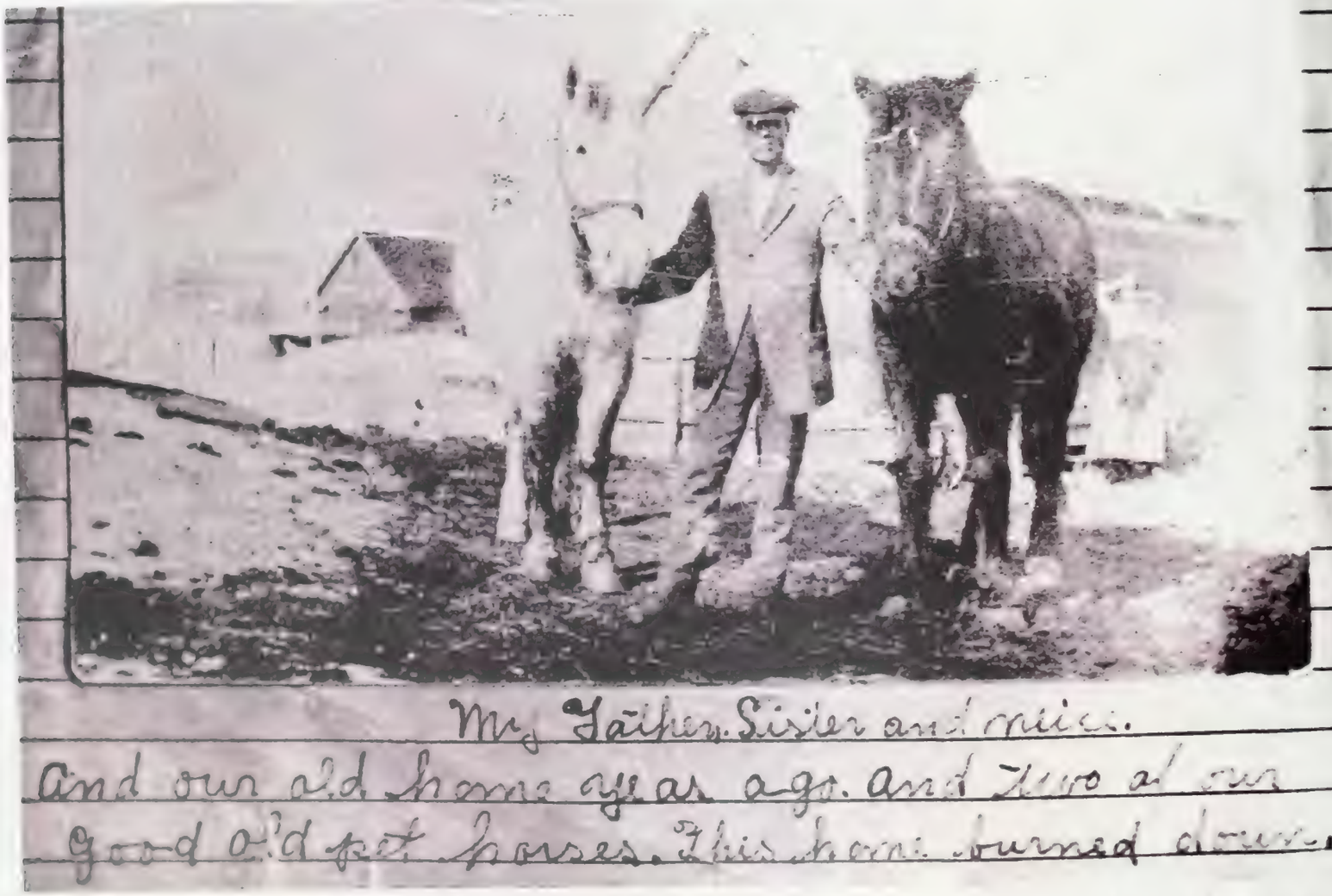
Little did I realize as I sat on that log over the area of the future well site that the inferno I was surrounded with was the total destruction of my birthplace. The flames reached higher and higher with each gust of wind and I was totally oblivious to the torment that the rest of the family was experiencing. This scene of destruction took place during the darkness of night. . . I do not remember any details of what actually happened or why except the spectacle of the huge holocaust that was quickly destroying our home.[9]

Dad did not despair, however. The family took up residence in a grain storage building which was upon the property. This served as home until Dad was able to purchase a simple frame home from a Roy Dickinson. This was moved to the property where it was repaired and set up to serve again as another home.



This 2010 photo shows **the Davis family's well head** which served their water needs on their 38-acre "St. Anthony Canal" property from 1909-1918. It is the only remaining evidence of the family's dwelling. Their home burned down in 1918, when Versal was three. Watching the fire consume the cabin was his first life memory.

Versal's father, Gould, with two of his horses, 1918. This photo was taken near the time Dad's birth home (visible in the background) was destroyed by fire and is possibly the only photo of that building. His older sister, Leatha, and her baby daughter, Nina, can be seen in the right rear of the photograph. This poor-quality image is from Dad's sister Merlie's *Book of Remembrance.*



Versal La Tel Davis



Versal (9) and his niece, Damaris Olsen (5), on the Davis ranch, summer 1924.

Dad was a tagalong baby by seven years, the youngest of eight in the Gould and Alice Davis family. Many of his siblings were grown and gone when he was a child. However, two of his sisters, Merlie and Leatha, and their children moved back to the ranch during years of marital difficulties so Versal had nieces to tease and nephews to play with. Damaris, in this photo, was Merlie's daughter.

Dad's Pioneering Spirit

As I have done a good deal of research regarding Dad's life, I have come to realize that he, like his own father, had a keen desire to branch out and experience frontier life.

In my history of him I have recorded how he left Utah and came to St. Anthony, Idaho [following his marriage to my mother]. In doing this he had to be very frugal and conservative. Success depended upon desire, hard work and management of available resources. He adhered to all of these as he developed homes and property for use.

He had little in material and financial wealth when he commenced his life on a developing frontier. But, disappointments and difficult times did not alter his self-appointed course.

He labored as a timber and sawmill hand for several years as he also developed and homesteaded two farms. This required a tremendous amount of effort. But, at this time, his health was supreme. Later, he suffered a debilitating heart attack, which, from then on forced him to pace himself. This he did as we sons took over the physical work.

He held several civic positions, which did not require very much physical effort. One of these, as member of the cemetery board, proved to become a vital and evident monument to him. You see he is buried in the landscaped and cultured cemetery, which he engineered and directed to be beautified.



John Gould Davis, about 14 years old, ca.1881.

Near the time this photo was taken, Gould left his home in Spanish Fork and struck out on his own. Versal writes about the circumstances in his history of his father:

". . . there was a short interval when my father became inactive [in the Church]. About this time, polygamy was a controversial matter. Charles A. [Gould's father] did not actually live with other wives but there were 2 or 3 who were sealed to him. Sometimes this was done to provide home and sustenance for widows. But, never-the-less, some shock was experienced by the younger children. I, personally, feel that my father was a victim of such extenuating circumstances. . . . At age 14, father went to live with his oldest brother, Warren. But, even this was difficult and within a year or so he finally left family ties and became a vagabond. This type of existence became a media whereby he traveled far and worked at various opportunities. [His pre-marriage work included freight hauling "to surrounding isolated areas," lumber work in Oregon's Willamette River Valley, and working as an officer of the law back in Spanish Fork, Utah, his hometown.] [11]

Versal LaVal Davis

Dad was water master of the Dewey Canal for twenty years. He helped build this waterway at the start of the century.

I'm proud to say that I share his desire for less-crowded places. However, unlike him, I cannot retreat to an Idaho frontier — there are none left.

In his tenure on earth he did much of great worth as he produced and provided for a large family. He worked hard physically and, at the same time presented a living example of religious perfection. He was admired and respected by all who knew him. He will never be forgotten.

I cannot expect to exceed his record — I'll be lucky to equal it.

a major factor as both visited several different temples.

They were respected and loved by the entire community where they lived for almost fifty years. Their 50th wedding anniversary was held on Dad's birthday, Jan. 22, 1942. He died two months later. Both were packed and ready to depart for St. George Utah, where they expected to spend two or three weeks doing temple work. Mother died about six years later while living at Bert and Vera's.

I'm certain that Dad and Mother are both progressing in the spirit world. I expect to join them soon. It will be a great reunion.

I hope their progeny can and will build upon what Dad and Mother provided.

Tribute to Mother and Dad

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 153)

In my foregoing entry, I told briefly of my father but in this, I wish to express some of my sentiments regarding him and my mother as they experienced life. My own golden years have brought me a much deeper appreciation of them and what they together endured.

Mother and Dad must have had an inherent desire to love, live and succeed. Had they not, they would not have produced the large and respected family which they had. Their children have not been perfect but, in general, have been and are good people. Also, Dad and Mother shared the same pioneering spirit as they, together, carved an existence out of the Idaho frontier.

As time went by they were confronted with marital problems of two daughters. I don't know much of these trials except Mom and Dad became very involved as they tried to help and support in these situations. It must have taken a great deal of love and patience to face such problems.

The material things of life were procured, for each did his or her share to obtain the needed necessities. We, as children, were well taken care of.

Religion became a vibrant and motivating force in their lives as church attendance and great genealogy research became manifest. Temple work also became



The Golden Wedding Anniversary portrait of John Gould Davis and Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis, 1942.

Gould and Alice married on Jan. 22, 1892, Gould's 25th birthday. Alice was 18. In the early years of their marriage, Gould worked in Utah Valley's sugar beet industry, timbered in the mountains near Spanish Fork, returned to Oregon's lumber industry (this time with Alice), and again hauled freight in Utah and Idaho, a job which took him to the Upper Snake River Valley and excited his interest there.

My Parents and Desperados

[illegible] told by Versal LaVel Davis [illegible] Davis Bird, his daughter, at her home in [illegible], Colorado on 5 Aug. 1984.

I'll try to relate this story the way I heard it. Basically this is the way it happened. It occurred in the home where I was born — the one by the St. Anthony Canal — but it happened before I was born.

One time mother was alone in our home. A man came down the road about three miles north and east of St. Anthony. He was riding a horse, a fast animal, but it was quite tired; he'd been riding it hard. He stopped out by the gate, looked around, could see nobody, and then walked to the door of our frame home. He then knocked on the door. Mother came and asked what he wanted. He said he wanted something to eat. (He had guns — a rifle and also a standard six-gun strapped to his side.) She said, "Well, okay." She wasn't going to argue because he looked like a desperado and [she] was sure he would just push her aside and get what he wanted anyway. She went into the kitchen and cooked him a meal. During this time he watched her quite closely and kept looking out the window a great deal. Finally, Mother brought the meal to the table. When she placed the meal in front of him, he went around the table so he could sit with his back to the wall and had her stand between him and the door. Then, he laid his six-shooter on the table and laid the rifle to the side of his chair; he was making sure they would be [illegible] available. Then he ate. After he finished eating, he thanked her for the meal, looked out both windows and the door, satisfied himself that no one was there, and rushed out to his horse. He rode quickly away.



Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis, commonly known as Alice.

Later, they found out this man was from the Rigby area about 20 miles to the south. Either that day or the day before, he had killed a young boy. People of the community were after him. He went to the Jackson Hole area, which was notorious for harboring outlaws. I don't know if he was ever apprehended.

This [next] episode took place in Spanish Fork, Utah where my dad was an officer of the law at the time. [He was in his early 20s and not yet married.] A stranger traveling through the area went into the local pool hall and was bragging that he could maim, kill, shoot or beat any man in town. The people believed this because he was a very rugged-looking individual. My dad went to the pool hall and confronted him. They both had guns but before the man could reach for his, dad simply said, "You go ahead and reach; if you think you can beat me, go ahead." (I can easily imagine how the offending individual must have felt as he faced my father, who was waiting for a response. I've looked into Dad's steel-gray eyes many times and I, also, knew when he was deadly serious.) The man cowered and left by way of the rear of the building. He then mounted his horse and rode out of town.



John Gould Davis, commonly known as Gould.

A footnote to this story: Dad was quite handy with guns. He had them on the homestead in Idaho, but my mother didn't like them. One day she gathered up most of his guns, especially his handguns, and threw them into the deep water of the St. Anthony canal, which ran near their home. She didn't tell anyone about it until quite awhile later.

Does Color Make A Difference?

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 157)

This episode took place about the time that I was born in 1915. I, of course, did not actually see or hear the drama as it took place but the lasting truth has existed and I record here the facts as they were made known to me by my mother.

Dad stepped from the small living room area and reached for his heavy winter coat. It was cold outside and some evening chores had to be taken care of, so the comforting warmth of the sheepskin lined apparel was much needed.

As he opened the door he said, "I won't be very long out there, Mother." (He called my mom by this name a great deal.)

He entered the yard area around this small simple homestead then he proceeded toward the equally simple pineboard-covered barn. As he walked he drew the collar of his coat more firmly about his neck and face. The cold was such that preparation against it became almost routine.

Then [he heard], "Help me! Oh, somebody help me!"

Dad stopped as he heard sounds of a human voice. He listened and again the frantic "Help, Oh, help me!" He looked in the general direction of the sound and saw three men walking rapidly on the canal bank between the Snake River and the St. Anthony Canal. These men were going down stream in the direction of St. Anthony, which was about three miles away. Dad watched intently but no calls for help seemed to be associated with the departing men.

Again, the plaintive cry for help came to his ears. Then looking closely in the direction of the cry he espied an object in the water of the deep and wide canal. This area of concern was downhill and about three hundred yards from the barnyard.

As Dad surveyed the scene he noticed a hand rise above the icy water. Someone was trapped in the ice encrusted canal!

He immediately and thoughtfully gathered two or three boards then raced to the edge of the canal. Out in the center and floundering in the icy water was a man. Dad quickly laid the boards in a line toward the open area. He did not step on the ice but instead laid the supporting planks before him as he crawled toward the desperate man.

"Now do as I say or we'll both drown," Dad firmly told the now freezing man.

" I'll do what you tell me, Gould, I'll do whatever you say," the man replied as he held the edge of the thin ice.

Thereupon Dad gave the unfortunate man the instructions needed to aid in pulling him onto the boards. Presently this was done and then Dad slowly inched backward along the supporting boards as the rescued man inched forward in a similar manner.

Soon the bank was reached and Dad assisted this individual to his feet then promptly escorted him to the warm house. There Dad and Mother assisted him in drying out his clothes and becoming warm again.

Now this from Dad: "Billy, what went on there?"

"I was fishin' through a hole in the ice," Billy replied.

"Well, those other guys out there, wouldn't they help you?"

"No, Gould. When I fell through the ice, they just laughed and then took off," Billy replied.

"You mean they refused to help you?" Dad stated in amazement.

"That's it Gould. I'm sure glad you heard me," the shivering man replied.

This man was a negro by the name of Billy Tanner. He had been fishing near some white men when he had fallen through the ice. These men had deliberately left him to perish in the ice cold water.

Needless to say, this man became a close friend to Dad. Many of his descendants became liked acquaintances of mine.

A sequel of appreciation to this incident was that Billy Tanner bought and presented each of the girls [Merlie, Vera, and Leatha] a ring.

Photo: Twila Bird

My Life on the Ranch, A Capsule Account

I will note some comments that were noted in my life history. But, this is a condensed recount of my years on the ranch, which was near the Last Chance Canal.

After my birthplace burned and was destroyed, Dad had another home erected which was about one mile north of my birth site. This, at that period of time, was a very nice building. Mother was pleased, I'm sure. Dad realized a great deal of gratification also, even though a mortgage was placed upon it. This home is still standing now in 1984. Some changes have been made but basically it is still much the same.

I don't recall our moving into this new home. I was very young at the time. The first recollection I have is remembering how my privacy was disturbed by the arrival of four girls, all a bit younger than I. This was a necessary intrusion as Mother and Dad provided sanctuary for [my older sister] Leatha and her children. She had separated from her husband, Frank Shosted.

Because of the fact that I was seven years younger than Wayne, my next oldest brother, I became somewhat indifferent to the needs of others. However, as time went by I adjusted more and more.

This living arrangement continued for three or four years until Leatha met and married Frank McFarland. All the girls except Alice went to live with their mother. Alice, the second girl, remained in our home. She and I got along fairly well but friction did exist at times. She and I attended school as we rode on the school wagon each day.

During my boyhood years I was joined a great deal by my nephew, Warren Olsen. He and I had many, many experiences together. These are related in a separate section of my Flashbacks.

Dad increased his farming activities as he acquired more land to operate. The boys, my older brothers, were still at home and they provided much-needed help. The ranches included the homeplace of 120 acres, the "Upper Farm" of 160 acres and two rented farms: the Intermountain of 240 acres and the Wilcox Ranch of about 160 acres.

It became my task to build, repair and look after the miles of fences. Irrigation ditch cleaning became a major chore. Patrolling the cattle areas was a welcome change at times.

In addition, I helped in taking care of farmyard work such as feeding livestock, caring for chickens and geese and turkeys, cleaning stables, cutting firewood and shoveling trails in nearby fallen snow. Many other activities were involved as we all worked together to make things prosper.

Summertime was the busiest as crops, cattle, fencing, haying and harvesting had to be attended to. Early spring, late fall and winter demanded less time and effort. But each season had its special charm and meaning.

During much of the time I, of course, was involved in school. I'll ever be grateful to Warren, my oldest brother, as he assisted me in school assignments. He went on to become a noted scholar himself.
In each season I enjoyed fun times as they became interspersed with swimming, camping, skiing, shooting guns, hunting, trapping, ice skating, and other things as the seasons permitted.

Church became a steady factor in my life as attended required meetings. I received baptism at eight years of age and then I attended church primary. My sister, Merlie, was my teacher. Priesthood ordinations followed as age and worthiness permitted.

I commenced dating at about age 17. I did not go with many girls but I did respect and enjoy the ones I did accompany. Thelma, of course, became my only consideration and we finally started "going steady" sometime prior to our marriage in 1937.

After Thelma and I were married, we lived on the ranch and occupied the north section of the ranch home. These were good years but many adjustments had to be made as we struggled to solve many problems. Family increase became apparent and some dissension existed between my brother and sisters and myself. This was because of misunderstandings between us. However, this never became a major problem and has long since died out.

Dad passed away in 1942 and the ranch became my direct responsibility. I included Mother in many decisions as she was still with us. Eventually she went to live with others of the family and after about five years, she also died while living with Bert and Vera in St. Anthony.

The Second World War took place while I was on the ranch. These were tense, demanding and sobering years as Thelma and I managed to carry on. Again, I write here, Thelma became ever more precious as she helped in every way she could.

In the fall of 1946 I took a job as a service mechanic in the Economy Chevrolet Garage. This lasted until spring when I devoted all my time to the ranch needs. This pattern followed the following year except I worked in auto-body work as I worked out an apprenticeship. Finally, Thelma and I decided to sell our meager interest in the ranch and procure a home in St. Anthony. This was done as I felt I would become a better mechanic than a farmer.

I must admit, however, that my years on the ranch were gratifying and gave me a firm base to continue on.



Gould and Alice Davis' extended family, summer 1919.

Shortly before this photo was taken the Davis' home near the St. Anthony canal burned down. Until they could move into their bigger, new home on the Last Chance property, Gould and Alice and their unmarried children lived in a grain storage shed then a simple frame home that was "moved" to the property.[13] The names of Alice and Gould's immediate family members are listed in bold. Those in the photo include:

1. Gould and **2. Alice Davis**

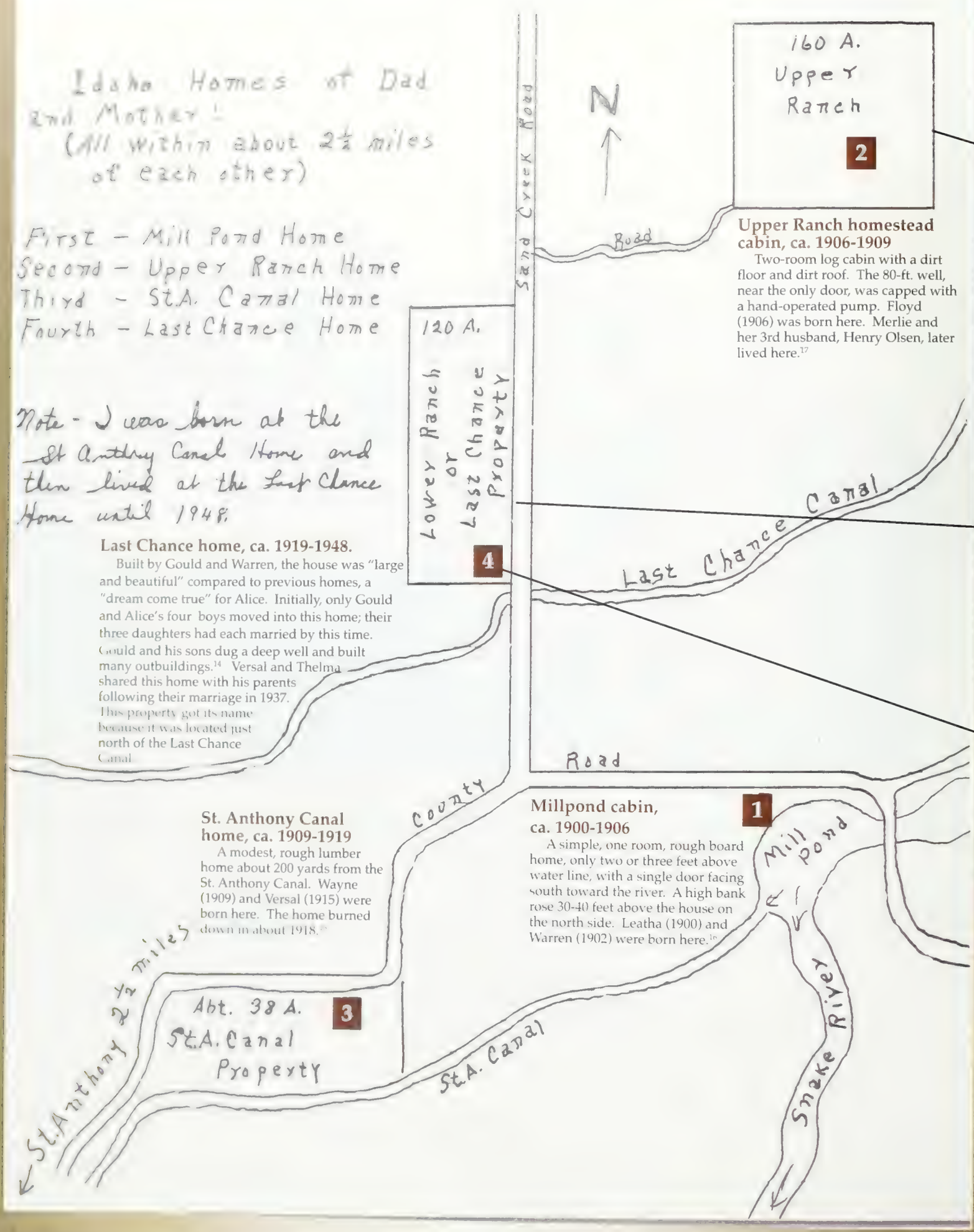
3. Merlie Davis Olsen and her third husband, **4.** Henry Olsen. At the time this photo was taken, Merlie was pregnant with Henry's baby, Damaris, her fourth child. Merlie's other children include: **5.** Albert Swainston (by her first husband, Henry Swainston); **6.** Bernice Caplinger, and **7.** Warren Caplinger (both by her second husband, Fred Caplinger).

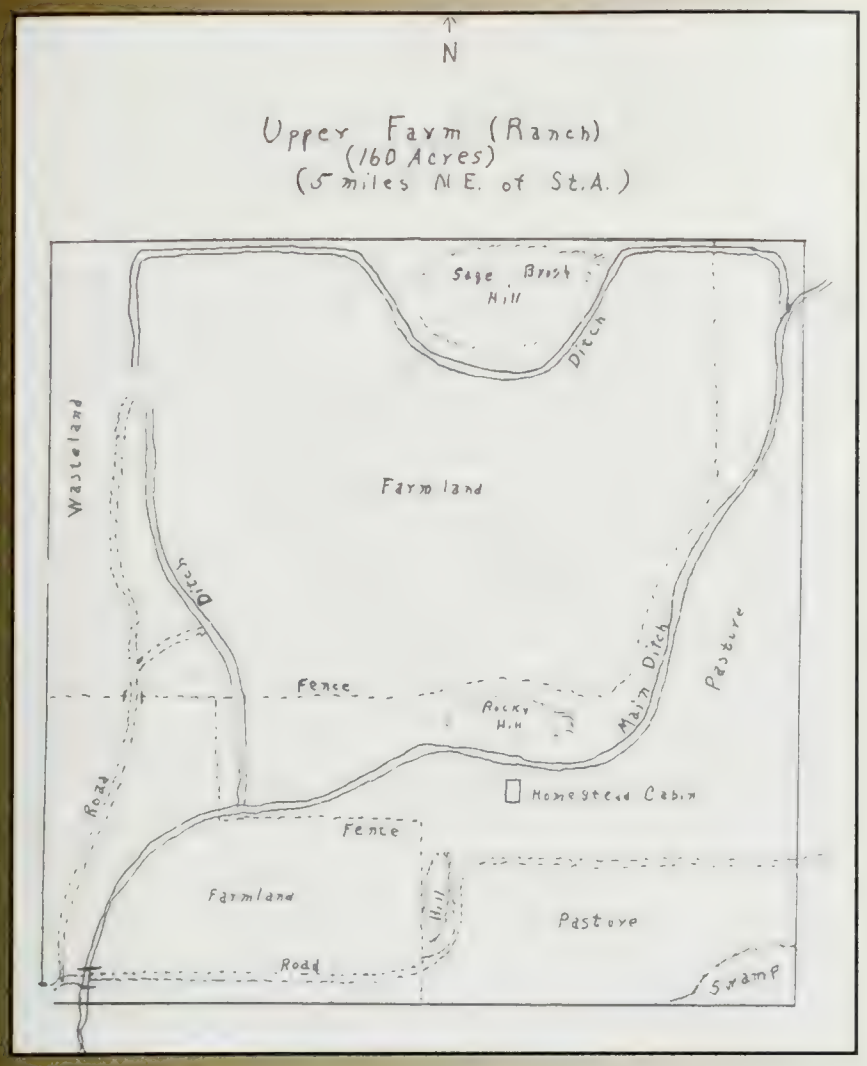
8. Vera Davis Loveland (pregnant with her first child, Cleova) and her new husband, **9.** Bert Loveland.

10. Leatha Davis Shosted and her two children: **11.** Nina (held by her Grandpa Davis) and **12.** Alice (a few months old, in Leatha's arms). Leatha's husband, Frank Shosted is not in the photograph.

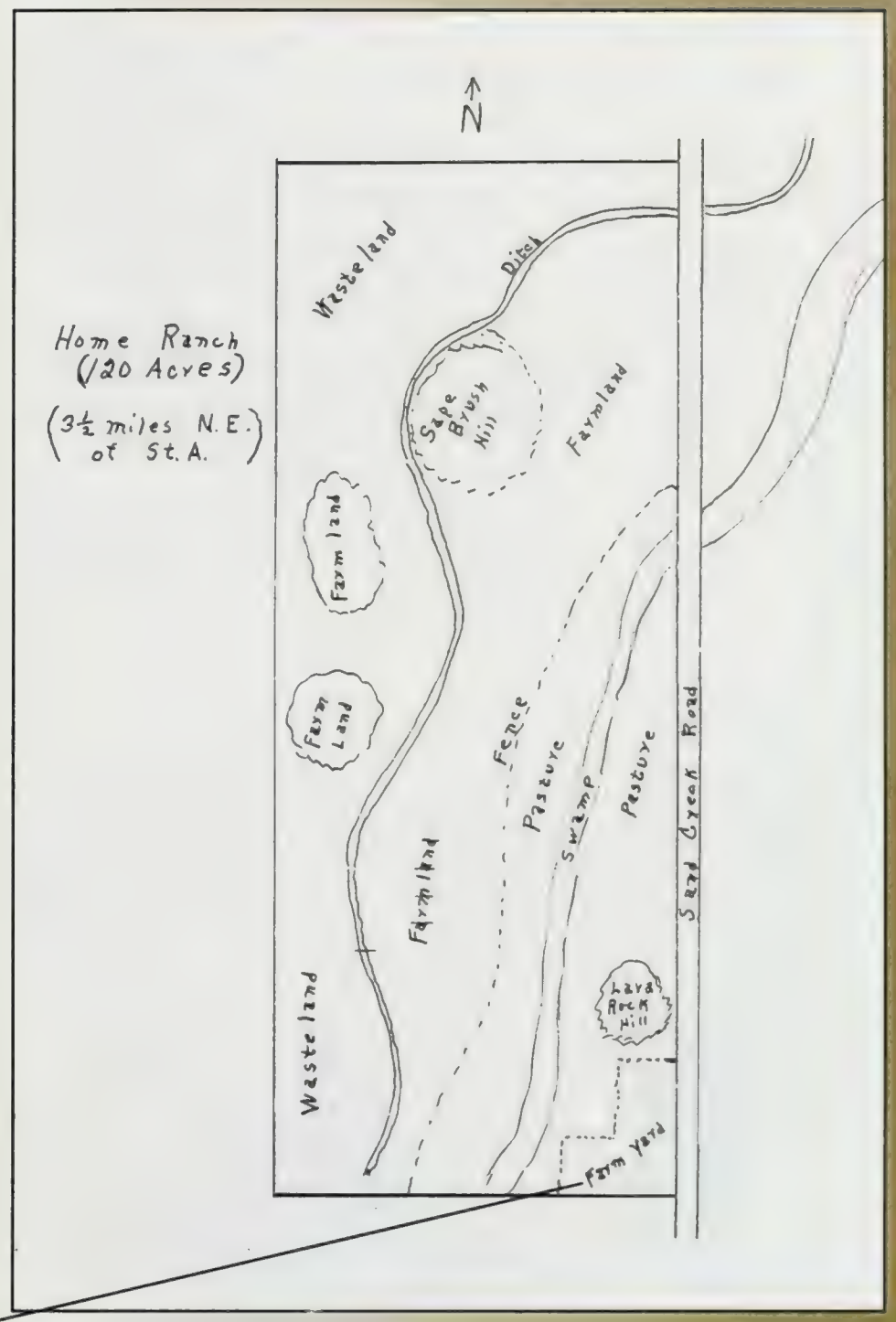
13. Floyd Davis, **14. Wayne (Pat) Davis**, and **15. Versal Davis** — Gould and Alice's younger children — are all standing in front. Their oldest son, **Warren Davis** (who was seventeen), is the only living Davis child not included in this family grouping.

16. "Aunt Chris" [Lucretia], (as identified by Thelma Davis), one of Gould's sisters, was visiting at the time of the family photo.

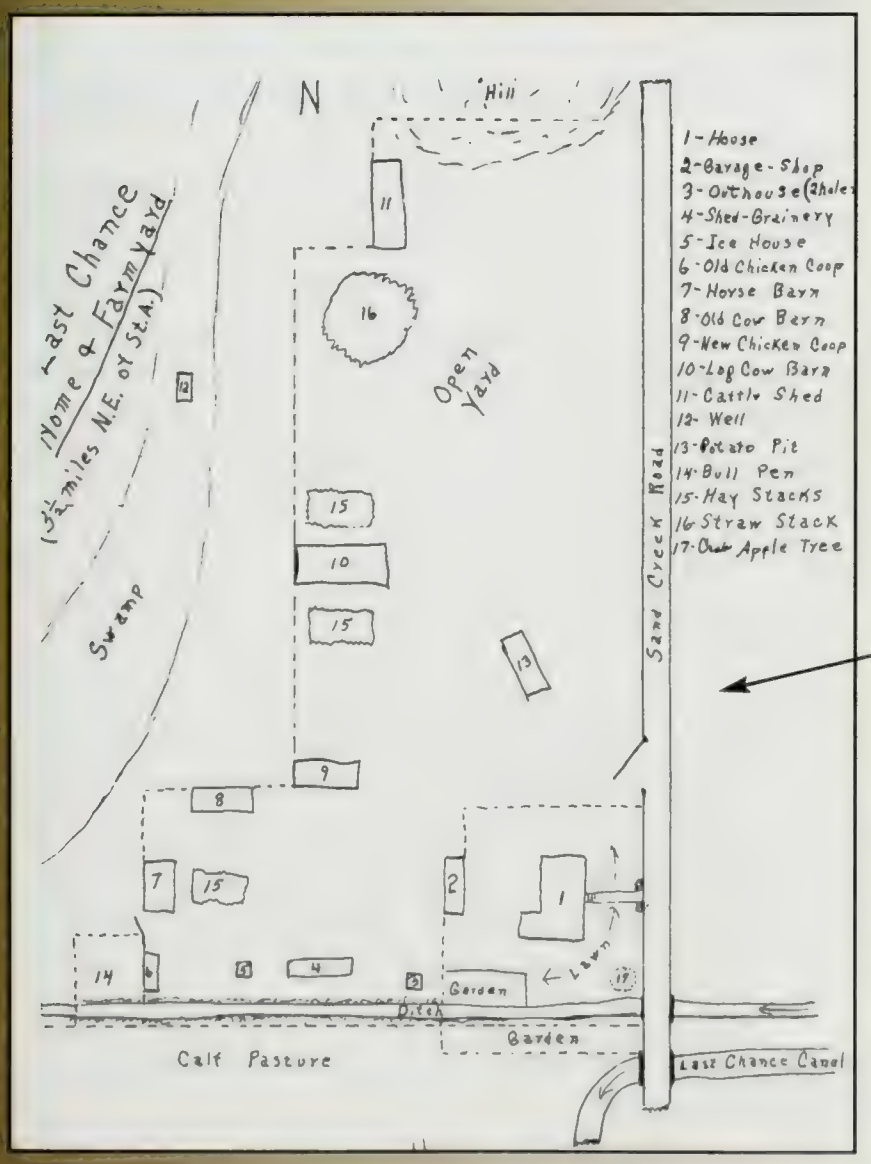

Idaho Homes of Dad and Mother:
(All within about 2½ miles of each other)
First – Mill Pond Home
Second – Upper Ranch Home
Third – St.A. Canal Home
Fourth – Last Chance Home
Note - I was born at the St Anthony Canal Home and then lived at the Last Chance Home until 1948.
160 A. Upper Ranch
2
N
Sand Creek Road
Road
Upper Ranch homestead cabin, ca. 1906-1909
Two-room log cabin with a dirt floor and dirt roof. The 80-ft. well, near the only door, was capped with a hand-operated pump. Floyd (1906) was born here. Merlie and her 3rd husband, Henry Olsen, later lived here.[17]
120 A. Lower Ranch or Last Chance Property
4
Last Chance Canal
Last Chance home, ca. 1919-1948.
Built by Gould and Warren, the house was "large and beautiful" compared to previous homes, a "dream come true" for Alice. Initially, only Gould and Alice's four boys moved into this home; their three daughters had each married by this time. Gould and his sons dug a deep well and built many outbuildings.[14] Versal and Thelma shared this home with his parents following their marriage in 1937. This property got its name because it was located just north of the Last Chance Canal.
Road
County
St. Anthony Canal home, ca. 1909-1919
A modest, rough lumber home about 200 yards from the St. Anthony Canal. Wayne (1909) and Versal (1915) were born here. The home burned down in about 1918.[15]
Millpond cabin, ca. 1900-1906
1
A simple, one room, rough board home, only two or three feet above water line, with a single door facing south toward the river. A high bank rose 30-40 feet above the house on the north side. Leatha (1900) and Warren (1902) were born here.[16]
Mill Pond
St. Anthony 2½ miles
Abt. 38 A. St.A. Canal Property
3
St.A. Canal
Snake River



Upper Farm (Ranch)
(160 Acres)
(5 miles N.E. of St.A.)



Home Ranch
(120 Acres)
(3½ miles N.E. of St.A.)



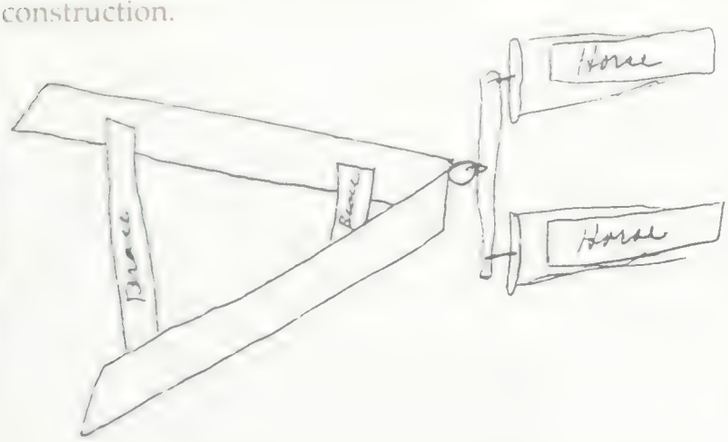
Drawings by Versal Label Davis

A Go-Devil

(Flashback, Journal I, p. 145)

I suppose very few people today know what a go-devil is or was. Only people who are in the older age bracket, who have lived in rural conditions, would know of such a thing.

This oddly-named piece of equipment was a crude predecessor to the very efficient mechanical snowplow in use today. It was of common usage in rural areas during the winter months. Horses were used to pull it as snow was pushed aside by the angular, upright sides. The picture, or sketch, below indicates its general construction.



Drawing by Vernal LaVell Davis

The driver of the team stood on the short front brace. The rear brace supported the rear blades. I have ridden the rear brace many times as a boy. As a young man, I have occupied the front area as a driver of the team. Sometimes, it was great fun.



David Birch on his own homemade "Go-Devil," on his farm south of St. Anthony, Dec. 1938. David, who was Mom's (Thelma Hall Davis') grandfather, stood on the front brace to add weight so the V-blade would dig deeper into the snow base. His go-devil was powered by a tractor, driven by his son, Jesse, rather than horses.

The Quilting Tradition

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 149)

In the ranch home, near the Last Chance Canal, there was a large front room. Of course, it was used for various purposes but I distinctly remember how my mother used it repeatedly as a quilting room.

Practically all the bed covers were a product of her ability in this commendable endeavor. It was a tradition handed down from her parents and grandparents. She certainly kept the process alive.

I, often as a boy, assisted in setting up the frames and stands. This was fun for me.The finished quilts were divided out where most needed, often as charity.

Thelma has also worked a great deal in this interesting activity. She, too, has tried to perpetuate a great legacy.

Ignorance is Bliss

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 147)

Swings Department Store was situated on the corner of Main Street and Bridge Street in St. Anthony. It was a large building and supplied the residents of the neighborhood with a large variety of needs.

My brother, Floyd, was a clerk working in the store, having just recently been hired.

One day a lady came into the store where she was joined by several other people. Floyd offered to assist her and was doing so when she shyly asked him for a package of sanitary napkins. Floyd was young and ignorant of such things and so he simply asked her if she preferred any special brand. He was hoping for a clue to learn about what she desired.

She awkwardly and quietly said, "I'd like the Kotex brand, sir."

Floyd, still ignorant of it all, looked puzzled then in a loud voice he shouted to Mr. Swing who was in an upper office near the back of the store, "HEY, MR. SWING, CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE THE KOTEX IS?" Floyd then turned toward his customer who was rapidly retreating among the other customers. There was no sale of this strange article.

To the customer's amusement and Floyd's chagrin he soon found out what this important piece of merchandise was.

Custom Made

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 78)

Before the advent of pressurized water systems in homes, the common outside two-holer was used. Such was a very common and usual addition to most rural home sites.

The one we used was situated about fifty yards from the house and stood majestically just beyond the garden site. I remember the well-beaten trail that led to it. In winter time it often became necessary to shovel a path through the snow to the structure. It was well to always maintain quick and ready access to the accommodation.

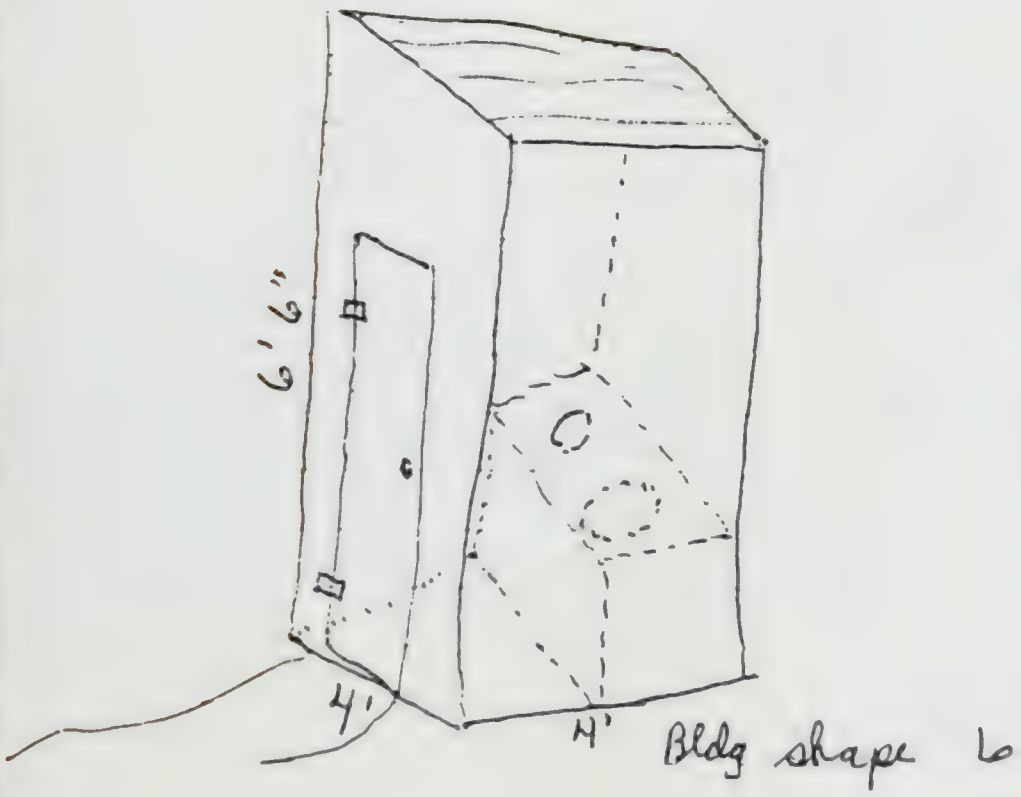
It was, in size, about four feet by four feet by six-and-a-half feet. The seat section was about chair height with two egg-shaped holes, one to accommodate the needs of younger people and one for adults. I recall, as a young boy with my older nephew, Dutch, that we used to challenge each other to determine which of us could hang the farthest down the opening. This we would do by sliding our rear ends lower and lower as we slid as far as our armpits and knees.

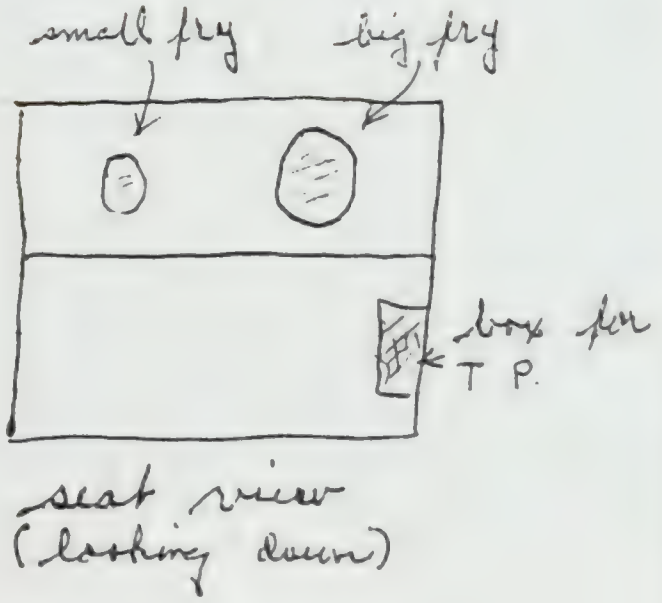
However this could not be done in the colder months of winter. You see as the accumulation of deposits rose to a sharp, frozen pinnacle, we were thwarted in our efforts. But, the warming weather of spring caused a melting and tumbling of the obstruction, then the contest continued.

I can never recall that we ever used commercial toilet paper. Old newspaper and, of course, last season's editions of Montgomery Wards and Sears Roebuck catalogs were never wasted. These also provided visual entertainment as one sat and waited.

One time, because of the excavation beneath the building becoming literally filled, Dad and I were required to dig another repository. As we removed the dirt and gravel, we, after going down about three feet, encountered lava formation. Dad indicated that a deeper hole would be needed, so, with the aid of dynamite, we were able to loosen the lava and dig much deeper.

I well remember his words after the blast. They were: "Well, son, I'll bet that hole will never hear a louder blast than that even if it is going to be the new toilet location." I smile about that wry statement every time I think of the episode.





Drawings by Versal LaVel Davis

Why Me!

(Flashback. Journal II. p. 65)

Warren, my oldest brother, had elected to take me along as he intended to fly-fish a section of the Snake River, which was about five miles from our home. He had previously saddled up a horse, which both of us would ride to the selected section of river. I was only about 8 years of age and it was my intention to just follow along the river bank as Warren waded the stream, fishing as he did so.

Kid, you just play along as I go down the river and keep an eye on our "nag" so he won't try to leave us," Warren advised as we dismounted and tied the horse to a suitable black willow.

Thereupon, he rigged his fly rod and then waded into the crystal clear water of the beautiful Snake River. There were many trees and bushes bordering the stream and I found it very interesting to explore the various sections of such. Warren was having great success in catching rainbow trout and he occasionally voiced his pleasure as he hooked a good sized fighter. He was about 30 or 40 feet from the river bank where I was following along.

There was a narrow opening in the bushes along a convenient section of the bank. I was simply standing in such when Warren pulled the fishing lure from the water and then, matter of factly, proceeded to cast it to a promising spot farther into the river.

Then it happened!- "Ow, Ow !!" I screamed as I placed my had over my right eye.

Warren paid little attention to me as he pulled several times on the fly line which he supposed was snagged in a branch of a bush along the bank.

"Hey don't, Ow - Ow!!" I continued to scream out. Finally, Warren noticed the fly line was leading to me - not to a troublesome bush!!

"Well if I'm hooked on to you, Bishop (he often called me by this name), then unhook it and let it drop."

Then in a somewhat impatient manner, he waded to where I stood writhing on the bank.

"You aren't hurt that bad — stop your blubbering," he told me.

Then he placed his hand upon the fly lint to find out where he had inadvertently snagged me.

Then, "Oh, my hell kid," he shockingly exclaimed. His fly hook had pierced my right eyelid, fortunately without marring the eye itself. But his repeated tugging had stretched the delicate covering and had some bleeding.

He very, very carefully extracted the offending hook and then had me wash the eye. Soon, I was able to stand the discomfort and we then went back upstream to our four legged conveyance and commenced the long ride home.

Thankfully, the eye lid soon healed and the remembrance of the event became history.

But why, amid thousands of other snag possibilities, did it have to be my eye lid?

Long Johns

(Flashback. Journal II. p. 148)

With great amusement now, but embarrassment then, I remember something that I was subjected to. It was this: In the colder months of winter my mother would see to it that I was bathed properly, then after such, I was instructed to don a pair of 'long John' underwear. Well, the cumbersome apparel was bad enough but to make matters worse, she buttoned them on me and then STITCHED THE ENTIRE FRONT.

I was a growing boy and as such I was mortified to suffer such indignation. My childlike pride was hurt; yet, I could not openly rebel. Also, I was required to wear the undergarment for two weeks, at which time I was required to bathe in the round galvanized wash tub. Then, as long as the colder weather lasted, I was subjected to the same ordeal again.

Also, these garments were usually of part wool and therefore caused itching. But my complaining did no good. It wasn't until I was considerably older that I was free to bathe when I wished and then wear what seemed proper and comfortable.

Near Tragedy

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 166)

I often told Thelma how I nearly became a traffic - fatality in St. Anthony. She repeatedly asked me to record the event, so this is as she requested;

I was about 5 years of age and was very active. My parents and I had driven to St. Anthony as we utilized Dad's canvas covered Star automobile. My parents had done some grocery shopping in a small store on the west side of Bridge Street, between Main Street and 1st North. After paying for our goods, we left the store and commenced along the sidewalk toward the crossing at 1st North.

In my irresponsible manner as a thoughtless child, I ran ahead. Coming to the pedestrian intersection where it crossed eastward over Bridge Street, I promptly started across well ahead of Dad and Mother. Then a frantic "Son, come back here," was heard from my alarmed mother. She did not have time to say more before it all happened.

I had not seen a car as it approached from the North. In response to mother's call, I almost stopped. In doing so, I turned somewhat and, as I did so, I fell to the pavement. I was in this position when the car came to a stop as the front tire pressed against my rib cage.

I was terrified for a time but this was overcome as Dad and Mother exhibited increased love for me. Oh yes, I was taught, also, to observe more restraint and caution.

Bridge Street, between Main and 1st North, in St. Anthony, ca. winter, 1920. This photo was taken near the same location and within months of the time Dad describes in this account. Horse-drawn sleighs line the boardwalks but within a few years horse-hitching posts were removed and relegated to side streets to make way for automobiles, which were becoming more prevalent.



Photo courtesy Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society

Our First Radio and Telephone

(Flashback Journal 2 p. 158)

I recall when Frank Shosted visited our home when I was about 10 years old. He traded a radio to Dad for something or other, which I can't remember. Nevertheless, this early Atwater Kent radio became a very interesting addition to our home. A crude but serviceable cabinet was built to hold the five tuning knobs and large assortment of 'B' batteries, 'C' batteries, and full size 6-volt storage battery. The speaker was a huge flaring horn-type affair that sat on top of the container box.



Very little could be tuned in during daytime hours but, late at night, particularly frosty ones, one could tune in KOA Denver and KFI Los Angeles. This was super to my young heart and I remember listening very intently to "Amos and Andy" and the "Major Bowes Amateur Hour."

Of course news was of great interest to Dad and Mom but I thrilled to the horror stories or westerns. This [radio] set remained in our home for many years and I'm sure the storage battery was charged about every 4 to 5 days. The aerial was a long, 4-wire affair that was anchored between the two chimneys on the house.

Another interesting item in our home was the wind-up telephone. This was a huge battery-operated affair mounted in a large, oak-wood cabinet, which was anchored to the wall near the southeast corner of the living room.

In order to use this, one had to turn a crank, which rang some bells, which in turn alerted the lady operator in the community. Then, by corresponding with 'central' for some time, one could finally talk falteringly to the desired person at the opposite end of the hookup.

This, of course, was a party line and a definite number of 'rings' signalled a certain telephone. I recall ours was number 291R4 (4 rings signalled our response).

Various other [neighbor's] telephones were connected to this arrangement and one could listen to their conversations easily. In fact, many times 3 or 4 could carry on a 'talk test' very easily. However, it was difficult to keep a secret when the telephone was used to inform another.

In the winter the cold had a very noticeable effect on the rural telephone wires. These would hum steadily for as long as the intense cold lasted. In fact, the colder the outside temperature, the louder the wires would 'sing' or hum.

Coal Oil Lamps

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 157)

Electricity was not available on the ranch until about 1945. In the early years of our marriage the kerosene lamp was a common household item. Just prior to our obtaining electric power we often used gasoline lamps similar to the common Coleman lantern which is used today for camping purposes.

When a boy, however, I remember very distinctly sitting in an oak rocking chair. Over my left shoulder the feeble light from a smoking, kerosene lamp shone to illuminate a Zane Grey novel or, perhaps, a study text from school.

In the years after I learned to read I spent many, many hours reading various books, magazines, and other interesting publications. Sometimes when I became perhaps little bored just reading, I would turn the burning wick up inside the glass globe. This would produce a large amount of fire and smoke. This black

smoke would, of course, foul the glass chimney and Mom would have to clean it, usually the next day.

Also, it was great fun to catch insects and drop them inside this chimney and observe their frantic efforts to escape the deadly heat from the burning wick.

It was great fun to extinguish the flame and, of course, the light by placing one's hand flat over the top of the chimney glass.

I'll never forget the "coal oil" can that usually was stoppered with a small potato. This was usually supplied by the grocer when we purchased fuel. This item (kerosene) was a frequent and necessary grocery need.

We usually kept three of these lamps ready for use. Also, a common kerosene lantern was a must when "choring" during the long, winter nights.

Vinegar Fizz

(Flashback, Journal, III, p. 131)

At this time (1986) it seems that there is a wide variety of drinks available - for a price. Common soda drinks are used so much that to most people they are not special. But I well remember when any non-alcoholic beverage was regarded as special and therefore became very much appreciated.

In my early years on the ranch, I recall that we often made our own drinks. One that I enjoyed at that time was made of three common ingredients: water, vinegar, and common baking soda. I must admit that the drinks today are much more satisfying but the concoction made of water with a dash of vinegar, sprinkled with my mother's baking soda was different.

We young kids craved something besides plain water or milk and so this private mixture became special to us. We, of course, did not drink very much of the elixir because it soon became nauseating to us. We pay large amounts for prepared drinks today but at that special time, years ago, very little expense was involved.

A side note: Usually we kids were given about twenty-five cents to use on July 24, the traditional holiday. I distinctly remember how this treasure was spent: five cents for a coveted bottle of soda water!! (This price included the cost of the small bottle.) The other twenty cents went for a candy bar, some cotton candy, or perhaps a small hamburger (without cheese). A few discharge caps were also acquired to be used in my old cap pistol. These were all very, very special.

My Four-tined Spear

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 44)

The large, white pig ran by me as I tried to chase it into the net-wire pigpen enclosure. I ran back into the open pasture and again I drove the animal toward the open gate. And again I was the loser as the determined animal ran by me and once again headed for the open pasture.

I was furious by this time and I looked for a suitable stick to use — then I spied something else!! There, in the straw stack, was a pitchfork. Well, I didn't intend to really hurt the darned pig but perhaps the sight of the weapon might help.

For the third time I rounded up the defiant pig and by motioning with the fork, I was able to drive the critter back to the gate. There it stood. Then turning to face me, it lowered its head and rushed by me. Without even thinking about it I hurled the four-tined pitchfork. With perfect accuracy it sailed forward and as the pig turned, one of the sharp tines pierced the tough skin of the hog's back. The [point of the] tine exited on the opposite side of the penetration point.

The pig ran squealing ever faster around and around as the fork relentlessly followed.

Did I recover the fork? No! I ran just as fast in the opposite direction.

What happened to the pig? Eventually the offending fork dropped loose.

Did anyone find out about this? Only that Dad was heard to say, "I wonder what caused those two holes in that hog's back."

The pitchfork? Oh yes, I managed to find it where it dropped in the pasture. I replaced it before someone wondered where it had been taken.

The Ice Gorge

Twila's Preface: Dad included this story in his Flashbacks even though neither he nor one of his family play a part in it. However, the event, which concerned a neighboring family, was indelibly impressed on his young mind. There *is* a Davis connection, though, for the family in this tragic story lived in the same cabin Gould and Alice had inhabited years earlier when they first arrived in St. Anthony and the location of the home is pivotal to the drama. If the timing had been different, this could have been a Davis calamity instead of one befalling the Will and Ethel Burt family.

Although Dad's second-hand narrative was vivid and well written, I'm replacing it with one penned by Cyril O. Burt, one of the story's primary participants. As the four-year-old boy in this unthinkable tragedy, his perspective is key. He would certainly never have lived to tell about it without the self-sacrificing courage of his parents, especially his mother, who was able to save only one of two children she desperately tried to rescue. Cyril's account also includes powerful, first-hand testimony from his father, Will Burt.

What follows is extracted and condensed from Cyril O. Burt's biography of his mother titled Ethel: A story of Faith and Courage.[18]



Will & Ethel Burt, in a photo taken as they began their lives together in 1919, eight years before the events in this story.

During the week before Christmas 1927, Will Burt and several others from St. Anthony, Idaho, had spent a few days at a sheep camp in the mountains northeast of Ashton cutting firewood. The temperature had dropped to thirty degrees below zero, making the wood cutting project a formidable task.

Back home his twenty-six-year-old wife, Ethel, also grappled with the extreme cold in their simple cabin on the banks of the Snake River. The mother of four children, in a house almost as cold as Will's sheep camp, she tried to warm her four young children and worked to prevent food and water from freezing. She obtained water by melting snow, as the river and nearby St. Anthony Canal were frozen solid. Wood had to be chopped, diapers washed, and the baby bathed. Her children were four-month old David, three-year-old Betty, four-year-old Cyril, and Gene who had turned six years old in September. As Ethel performed her tasks, she had no idea what was taking place on the mighty Snake River outside her door. She was unaware that ice had started backing up the water above the steel bridge a short ways upstream.

Tuesday, December 20, 1927 was a beautiful, warm, clear winter day, quite a change from several days of sub-zero weather with temperatures reaching thirty to forty degrees below zero. Cyril put on his mother's overshoes and Gene put on a pair of his Dad's boots and went out in the warm sun to play by the granary. Although it was hard to navigate through the snow in those big boots, it was fun.

Cethil Allen, a good friend and neighbor, brought a



Photo courtesy Cyril Burt

The three oldest Burt children — Betty (3), Cyril (4), and Gene (almost 6) — on the back of their family's 1918 Oakland automobile, a few months before the events of this story, summer 1927.

team of horses over to Will and Ethel's place to get a 1918 Oakland car he had traded Will for. He tied his horses up then stood in the yard talking to Ethel about his concern for the condition of the river. When he had crossed the steel bridge coming from his place, gorge ice was piling up on the upper side of the bridge and water was running over the floor of the bridge. He worried about the bridge going out.

Suddenly, Cethil saw a wall of water and gorge ice coming toward them. He told Ethel to get the kids and ran to turn his horses loose. Ethel hollered at Cyril and Gene and they came running as fast as they could. Ethel ran in the house to get the baby and Cethil took Betty and Gene and headed up the hill behind the Burt's cabin. Ethel wrapped a blanket around the baby, ran outside, took Cyril by the hand, and started running after Cethil, but it was too late!

The gorge of ice propelled by a torrent of water looked like a band of large sheep, jumping and running toward Ethel, baby David, and four-year-old Cyril. The rushing wall of water and ice ran over them, knocking Ethel down, covering her. She tried to hang on to Cryil's hand, while still holding the baby in one arm. She lost hold of Cyril's hand and he was gone, but she thought she still had the baby in her arms but with horror she suddenly realized the baby was gone, too. Terror-stricken, she frantically tried to stand up against the rushing water and huge chunks of ice! She then saw Cyril being carried downstream by the water and ice flow.

The ice gorge reached a small levee running north and south, which caused it to stop momentarily then channeled the water-propelled ice to either side, as it backed up and flowed over the levee. Ethel could see Cyril caught up in the slowed ice flow and headed toward him, without regard for her own safety. She could not swim, but worked her way through the chest deep water and ice until she reached her little boy. His foot was caught in the ice and she could not get him loose, so she stayed with him, rubbing his arms, legs and body, keeping them both alive, as she prayed for help.

While this drama was playing out with his family, Will Burt was nearing home with the team of horses trotting along and the sleigh runners slipping smoothly over the snow. He had a nice load of wood on the sleigh bunks and a Christmas tree tied on top. Approaching the river, he could hear the roar and ripping of the ice and water, as the warm weather caused it to break up. He saw Flo Maines run down and jerk his corral gates open and the sheep running for high ground. The increased flow of the river was forcing gorge ice high up on the banks of the river.

When Will reached the bridge, the gorge ice on the upper side was six or seven feet above the floor of the bridge and water was running over the floor. He could not take his load of logs over the bridge, so he tied the team to the fence and ran up on the bridge, just in time to see the gorge ice and water going over his house downstream! He ran as fast as he could across the bridge and down the road.

Will's narration of events follows:

I saw Cethil turning his horses loose, but couldn't see Ethel and the kids as I started running across the bridge. The water was over my shoes and the bridge was yanking and jerking from the force of gorge ice and water being forced under it. Ice was piled up on the upper side of the bridge above the railings and it looked like it could be torn apart anytime. Reuben and Earl Birch, who had been working on the south side of the bridge, decided to try crossing behind me with their team and sleigh. As they caught up with me, they hollered, 'Jump on the sleigh!' which I did.



The Will and Ethel Burt cabin three weeks following the ice gorge. Their 1918 Oakland car, which Cethil Allen had purchased from the Burts and was picking up on the day of the flood, is at the right. Later on Cethil took the car home, fixed it up, and drove it for quite some time. 7 Jan. 1927.

Gorge ice on the Snake River three weeks after it backed up and broke into a torrential, icy flood at the Twin Groves black steel bridge. The Burt's cabin is to the left. In the center is the Grant and Florence Packer home, which also flooded, and their higher (dry) barn. The man in the photo is unidentified. 7 Jan. 1927.

As we approached the high ground where Cethil, Gene, and Betty were, several neighbors were already there and I could see Ethel standing in water above her waist about a quarter of a mile away. As I started running toward Ethel, several men grabbed me and pulled me back out of the water, refusing to let me try to cross. Instead, six of us jumped in Parley Richmond's sleigh and took off to the west in an attempt to go around the body of gorge ice and water that was building up.

As the horses lunged through snow and ice along the canal bank, I could see why Ethel didn't move to higher ground. Our little boy was caught in the ice and she refused to leave him. A levee had caused the ice to pile up and water was running down both sides, forming an ice island that was too swift. So I ran up the canal bank to an old corral, working my way out on the poles and dropped into the water above them, stumbling and swimming downstream. A large piece of ice flattened me out, but it was smooth on the bottom and I slipped right out from under it. When I came up, I was right next to Ethel and Cyril. Ethel was hysterical and having a terrible time.

As I tried to get Cyril loose from the ice, I found the ice underneath was softer and I could dig it with better results and soon had Cyril loose. I had lost my bearing and didn't know exactly where I was or what I should do, from shock or something. Just then I looked up and Clarence Leseberg was standing by me.

The gorge ice had accumulated into a kind of bridge on the south side of us and Clarence had climbed over the ice and through the water to give us a hand. I was never so glad to see anyone in my life! He grabbed onto Ethel and pulled her to safety. I climbed out of the water and onto the ice with Cyril. With five good men helping, we soon had them in the sleigh and headed for higher ground. The horses had to swim, as water and ice flowed over the top of the sleigh box. Efforts of brave men driving a well-broke team of horses and holding the sleigh box on the bunks of the bob sleigh will always be remembered by those of us who were there.

They took Ethel and Cyril up to Ellingson's place where Mrs. Ellingson had a nice warm fire and blankets waiting. She and Florence Packer worked feverishly, rubbing life back into the bodies of Cyril and Ethel. Florence, who had witnessed



Photo courtesy Cyril Burt

A 1991 photo of the Twin Groves Bridge, which held back many tons of mounding ice before it broke free in a rushing gorge of ice chunks and water on 20 Dec. 1927. The bridge spans the North Fork of the Snake River at Twin Groves, Idaho. This view is looking downstream towards the location of the Burt's cabin on the other side.

Ice gorge survivor Cyril Burt stands on the Twin Groves Bridge and points towards the location of his childhood home. Cyril was the four-year-old boy who was kept alive by his heroic mother, Ethel, and rescued by his father, Will, who was assisted by other courageous men. Photo 11 Aug. 2010.

the whole event from her place, made the following remark about Ethel: "The dear soul was in the water for at least thirty minutes! We all cried as we had to cut away the clothing that was frozen to her body! I know our prayers were answered that day as we prayed unceasingly in their behalf.' For sixty-three years Florence and Cyril were great friends and she called him her 'miracle boy.'"

Endnote: Even though Will and hundreds of others spent many days searching for little David Burt's body, it was three months (102 days) before the baby's blackened (but otherwise undisturbed) body was found in an open field, still piled with grotesque chunks of ice and snow. His little blanket was caught in a wire fence nearby. After his funeral he was buried in St. Anthony's Riverside Cemetery.

The Davis' Mill Pond Home, 1900-1906

Years earlier the home where this tragedy occurred had been the first Idaho dwelling place of Gould and Alice Davis. [See map on p. 12.] They had lived in the cabin from 1900 to 1906. Two of their children, Leatha and Warren, were born there. Concerning this pioneer home, Versal wrote:

This millpond was a backwash area of the Snake River as it turned from a westerly flowing direction to a southern course. . . . A simple, one room, rough board home was resting on the north bank of the pond [when Gould and Alice arrived]. It was only two or three feet above water line. This simple structure had a single door facing south toward the river and the mill area. A high bank rose 30 to 40 feet above the house on the north side. . . This humble dwelling arrangement became home to the Gould Davis family. . . . Dad was employed at the Fogg Mill as a general hand. I've heard him speak of his being a sawyer, ratchet setter, timber cutter, and log roller. He mentioned his riding the large assemblies of logs, as they were bound together in groups, and then floated from the mountains near Warm River area to the millpond. This represented about a 20 mile float. This was, of course, all work but high adventure for Dad.[19]

Oh, Well, Who Knows?

Mr. Jessie Floyd, in 1925, was employed by a local creamery to drive around the rural neighborhood of St. Anthony and gather cream, which was used for various dairy purposes. This product was acquired by running raw milk through a hand-powered separator. The cream was stored in suitable containers and held until picked up by a person such as Floyd. The accumulated cream product was then taken to the creamery plant, where it was refined and made into butter, cheese, or some related product.

One day Floyd had covered much of his designated route, when he stopped at a place where some people by the name of Kennedy lived.

"Good morning, ma'am," Floyd said as he entered the house. "Is your cream ready?"

"Yes, I guess so, I'm here alone and you will have to wait a little bit while I put the darn stuff in that container over there."

"Well that's okay. I'm in no big hurry." Floyd replied.

The cream was in several flat, open pans on a table in a small back room.

Floyd walked to the opening of the room and then just observed and waited.

Mrs. Kennedy was busy pouring the cream into the central, large container, when her pet cat jumped upon the table. In so doing the animal landed in one of the containers, which held about six inches of cream.

"Oh, that damn cat, it causes me more problems than it is worth," Mrs. Kennedy remarked. Floyd supposed that particular container would be set aside, but no!

Mrs. Kennedy simply grasped the cat, held it above the container, then methodically stripped the cream, which was in the cat's fur, back into the container from where it had been absorbed.

"There is no sense in wasting that cream. Nobody will ever know the difference," she pointedly exclaimed, then she poured the [contaminated] cream into the large container. The cat was driven from the room and Floyd was presented with the cream. Soon he was on his way to the creamery.

Floyd had a difficult time resolving this episode, but I don't suppose the [resulting] butter seemed any different.

Also, the cat probably spent several enjoyable hours as it licked itself dry.



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson



Photo courtesy Dean Davis

Floyd Davis crafts a rocking horse, while his wife, Carrie, observes, ca. 1952. Floyd, Dad's brother, took great pleasure in creating all kinds of whimsical and useful objects his whole life. This rocking horse was particularly popular; friends who saw the one he had made for his children requested similar ones for their own. And Floyd was glad to oblige. Carrie made the manes for the entertaining rocking horses out of frayed rope.[20]

Helter Skelter

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 104)

My older brother, Floyd, was always very adept at making tinker objects. I had observed this and had been fascinated by his ability to innovate. The things he created were interesting: puzzles, little wagons, kites, little wooden animals, toy soldiers carved of wood, various wax objects, just to name a few.

Because of my having seen him do this, I, one time when about age 8, decided I would try doing the same. I experienced some measure of success as I slowly cut parts for and then assembled a little toy sleigh. This resembled the regular two-piece bob sleigh that was used for heavy draft work. However, it was only about 12 inches long. It was crude but yet it had most of the major parts needed.

I used to pull this, by means of a cord, over the loose snow. The tracks that it left were similar in shape to those of any sleigh.

One day I was creating track patterns in the new snow which had fallen. Behind me, I heard our farmyard tomcat utter a 'mee-ow'. I stopped, looked, listened and then — this tame, gentle animal was soon in my lap as I sat in the soft and loose snow. I carefully tied a loop in the end of the cord string used to pull the toy sleigh. While caressing the cat I slipped the cord over the cat's head, adjusted it and then put the animal on the snow and near the waiting sleigh.

Nothing happened until I took a step forward whereby the poor cat did also. Then the cat looked rearward, saw the following object, and bolted. Soon, all one could see was a tornado of snow, flying parts from the sleigh and occasionally a frantic object clashing helter-skelter.

Needless to say, my toy sleigh was no more and the farmyard cat was difficult to approach for many days.

Our Private Sheep Herd

I could hear the sheep long before they entered the sight of [illegible] by our house. As the bleating band came nearer I went to the front gate and watched. This band was normal size, about 3000 head. The mother ewes were calling to their young lambs and the lost infants were likewise bleating for their mommas. The din of noise was interrupted now and then by the sharp bark of a sheep dog. But I was waiting for the canvas-covered sheepherders wagon to come by. I knew, from past experience, where to go for the prize I was after.

As the white river of wooly backs filed by, I beheld the usual canopy rising above the dust from the hoof-beaten road. It finally drew near and I walked out to the center of the road.

The driver stopped his team of horses, looked down at me and said, "Well, kid, I guess you want these lambs I've got here. Is that right?"

"Uh-huh, I sure would."

"Well, OK. I don't know what I can do with 'em, so here they are."

[illegible] me three small lambs which I carried [illegible], to the enclosed front yard. Then the driver proceeded to follow the bleating herd. I know he was probably grinning about the whole thing.

These huge bands of sheep were driven, in the spring of the year, to the large open sagebrush range which lay north and west of our ranch. During the journey several of the young lambs were hopelessly separated from their mothers. These became tired and weak and trailed the main herd. They were then placed in the wagon box and became orphans or, as we called them, "bum lambs."

We would accumulate as many as two dozen of these, which we placed in a small clover pasture. While these bum lambs were small we bottle-fed them, providing cows milk. In the fall, after the sheep had attained fair size, we would sell them for mutton. This provided some extra cash for our needs. We would also butcher one or two for our own use.





A Shoshone Indian family similar to the one Versal describes in his story. Indians indigenous to the Upper Snake River Valley were those from the Bannock and Shoshone tribes. Today many of their descendants live on the Fort Hall Reservation, created by the Treaty of Fort Bridger in 1868. It became the designated home for bands from throughout the Idaho territory. Fort Hall is about 100 miles southwest of St. Anthony.[21]

Indians!

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 174)

The Last Chance Canal flowed under a wood-plank bridge. The water coursed from the east, under the bridge, then made a sharp S-curve to the south before resuming a westerly flow. Just south of this S-curve of water there was an open area between the road and a fence. This setting was about one block from our ranch home which was on the north side of the canal and west of the county road.

As a very young boy I recall how [Shoshone] Indians would erect a ragged tepee on the open camp area. A bony team of horses was tied to the rickety old wagon. A hungry dog would search for mice, squirrels, or scraps.

There would be an Indian man, a squaw, and two or three boys and girls. These natives would come to this spot each spring and stay for ten days or two weeks. I remember how I would watch them as they moved about. I suppose I even feared them a little. In fact, I would retreat in hiding when the Indian buck would come to the house asking for eggs or vegetables.

Mother and Dad always helped them some and in so doing they became very friendly.

These people would trap rock chucks which abounded in the area. These were used as food. Fish (suckers) were also caught and eaten.

After a sojourn of time they would then harness up, load up, and resume their journey north. They would reappear later in the season as they returned to the reservation.

Wolf at Midnight

(Pioneer Journal II, p. 35)

We had journeyed all day and now we were camped near a large high mountain called High Point. This was the area where Dad and I would cut our trees and then load them upon our horse-drawn wagons.

About five miles back, along the side of the road, there was a convenient place to water the horses. This we did and then resumed our journey. I soon noticed that Wolf, my white, wolf-like dog, was not with us. I worried some about this and alerted Dad. We stopped, called for the dog, but to no avail. So, down-heartedly, I followed Dad as we proceeded.

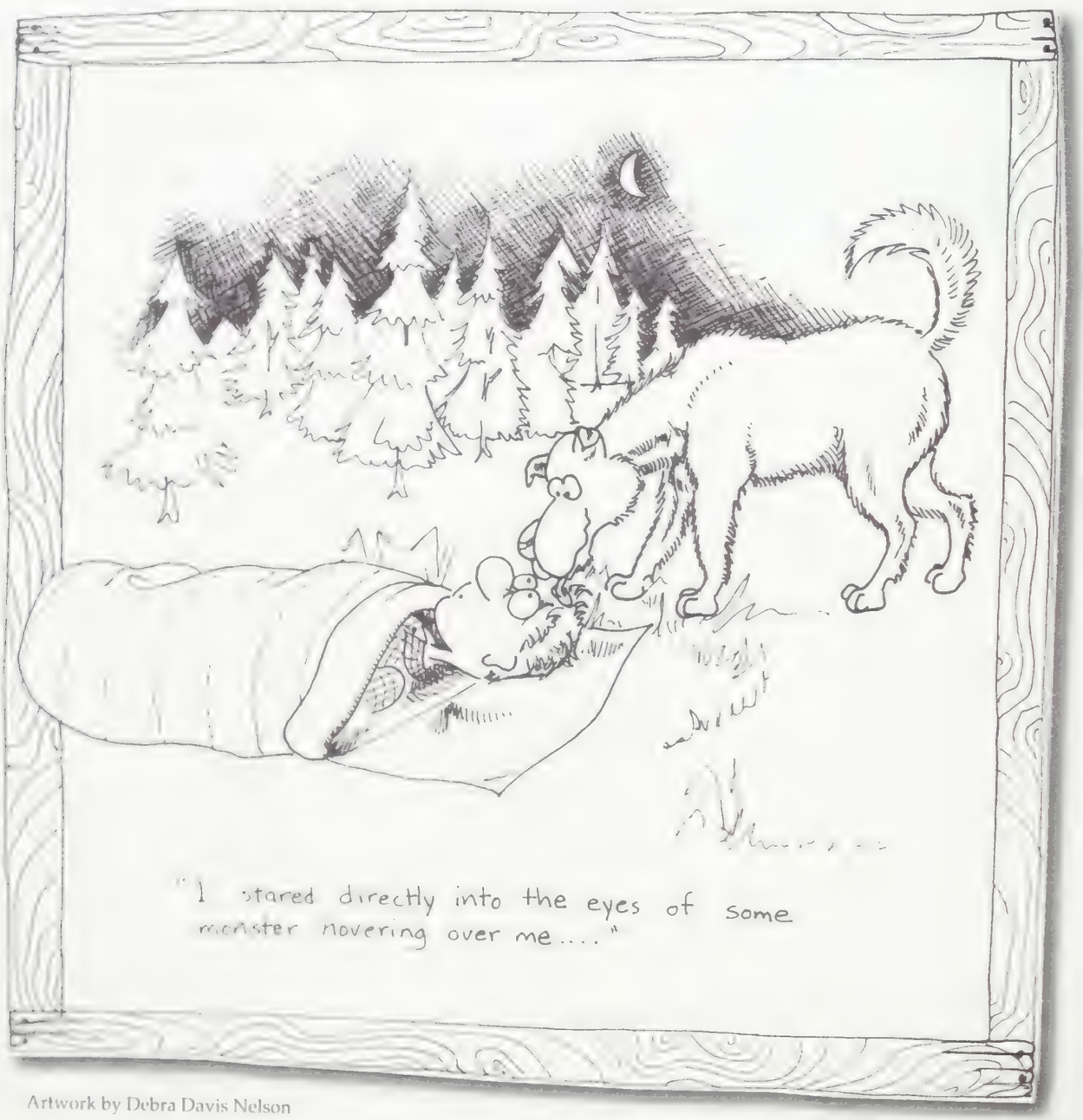
Arriving at the predetermined camp location we set up camp, fed our horses, cooked supper, then went to bed.

Our bed was placed upon some hay and was simply in the open under the stars.

Despite worrying about my dog as I heard various night sounds of forest wild life, I soon dropped off to sleep. The sound of a cougar in the distance made me crawl deeper into the blankets.

I was tired and therefore slept soundly. I must have turned during my slumber, however, because I was lying flat on my back when something awakened me.

A moist and warm something was being caressed across my face. I opened my eyes and in the semi-darkness of the moonlit night I stared directly into the eyes of some monster hovering over me.
Terrified, I rolled and took frightened refuge deep



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson

Verna LaVel Davis

within the bed. Then the ogre jumped upon me trying to get beneath the covers.

I was forced to confront my enemy and when forced to do so I recognized my dog.

A wave of relief went over me as I realized two things: one, I was free of a cougar or bear, and, two, I now had my dog again.

Happily, I let Wolf curl up beside me as we both slept soundly the rest of the night.

Free Protein

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 140)

A cold wet snow was falling on our isolated camp in the Elk Wallow region of the forest area. Darkness shrouded everything except the small circle of light emanating from the crackling wood fire. Two figures were stooped over the warming embers. One was watching the other as he stirred the contents of a tin can that was resting in the glowing ashes.

I peered from the snug retreat of my bed. I was slightly damp but nevertheless warm. I had been sleeping but was awakened by Dad and Floyd as they cut wood and built a fire.

The makeshift tent was only partly protecting the bedding and occupants beneath it. This shelter was a lattice-work of binder canvas which was used in harvesting of grain. This cover was not waterproof, a fact which was very evident here. The falling snow rested for a time on the structure then melted, causing a constant drip drip into the bedding.

Dad and Floyd had tried sleeping but as they became wetter and colder they emerged from the damp bedding. Quickly dressing, they gathered some wood, prepared it and then made a welcome fire. I simply cuddled up into a tight ball and tried to go back to sleep.

All this happened as we were camped in the timber while cutting and peeling house logs. This represented a stay involving about ten days. During this time we lived around the makeshift camp. Two teams of horses and two wagons were near us at all times. The binder canvas tent was adequate except when weather, such as now existed, descended upon us.

"Dad, here is a clean can that we can use to heat the postum in," Floyd said as he gave a large empty tin can to Dad.

"That will be just fine, son," Dad replied.

"I'll rustle up our tin cups, too," Floyd enjoined. Soon the water was boiling in the gallon can as it rested amid the red coals of the fire. Dad poured postum, sugar, and a can of condensed milk into the steaming water. Snow was causing a hissing sound as the flakes fell upon the hot embers. Dad and Floyd drew the collars of their coats more tightly around their necks.

Two blocks of wood were placed near the fire. Dad sat upon one, Floyd rested upon the other.

Here, son, try this," Dad offered as he handed a cup of postum to Floyd.

"Ummm, that hits the spot," Floyd soon remarked.

They had each consumed two or three servings when Dad placed his fresh cup to his lips. He swallowed once, then taking the cup from his mouth, he emitted a sucking sound.

"Must be a chip from the fire that popped into the pot," he simply said as he attempted to extract the postum from the object.

Floyd was sipping his warming drink while observing Dad.

"Hmm, that sure is a funny tasting piece of wood," Dad said as he reached inside his mouth and withdrew the puzzling object. Holding the particle in his hand, he reached out near the better light of the fire. Floyd leaned forward to observe also. There in Dad's open hand was the sucked-out remains of a large, black-headed, white-bodied woodworm!

Dad had consumed the innards of this common timber resident but Floyd was the one who showed signs of greatest repulsion.

I slept blithely on.

A side story to the wood worm episode is how Warren, Floyd, Wayne, and Dad used to "batch it," when they stayed away from the home place for several days at a time. They set up housekeeping in a small log house located on the dry farm they were operating.

Warren was asked one time how he managed to clean the dishes after each meal. He simply said, "We don't." Then he was asked how he managed after the dish was dirty. He replied, "We simply turn it over." Of course another question followed asking what was done next. He replied with finality, "We ate off the edges!"

Hay Time

"Hay Ho! Wake up down there and get that mare going." I awakened from my daydreaming as I lay in a disturbed heap on "Ol Flora."

I sat up and the old black mare slowly and mechanically started forward. The cable tightened behind her as pressure was exerted through the derrick system to the large Jackson fork which, in turn, was inserted into the large load of alfalfa.

The load was pulled upward until it cleared the haystack.

Warren yelled and Flora immediately stopped.

After a moment I heard "let 'er go" and Flora, without urging, simply turned and returned to the spot where she had proceeded from. Here she, by habit, turned to await the new signal to pull forward again.

This was part of the hay harvesting process which I took part in for many years. I was the "derrick boy" who rode the lone horse which was used to hoist the huge forks of hay. I actually do not remember when I first started to do this. Warren often contracted doing



Percal LaVel Davis

this work for neighbors and I automatically became a part of the labor force. This activity would start in early July and would continue almost steadily for three months.

I remember back, with amusement, when I used to actually go to sleep on the horse's back. But Flora had been used for this purpose for several years and she would actually respond to the audible signals from the man on the hay wagon and the one on the stack. Warren and others would laugh as I lay slumped against the harness hames. I would be totally unaware of the process until I started to slide off. Then I would instinctively hang on for dear life and in so doing I would awaken.

I remember also that I was conscripted as a 'tromper.' As men on the ground would lift hay, by means of a pitch fork, onto the hay rack I was supposed to walk upon it and therefore make a solid accumulation of the product. There have been times when I was literally covered by hay before I could crawl on top of it. Warren, Floyd, Pat, and Dad would then laugh at my misfortune.

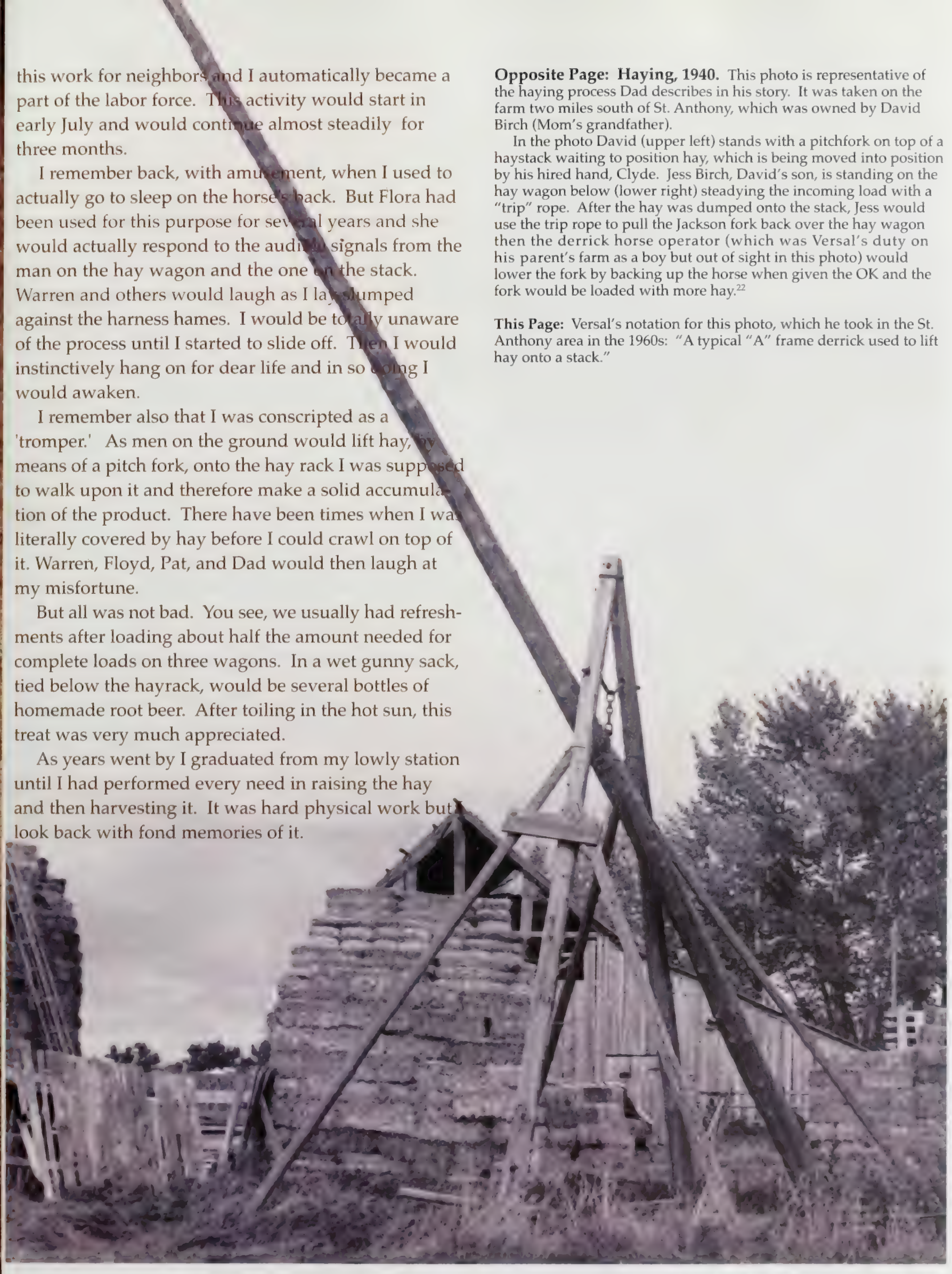
But all was not bad. You see, we usually had refreshments after loading about half the amount needed for complete loads on three wagons. In a wet gunny sack, tied below the hayrack, would be several bottles of homemade root beer. After toiling in the hot sun, this treat was very much appreciated.

As years went by I graduated from my lowly station until I had performed every need in raising the hay and then harvesting it. It was hard physical work but I look back with fond memories of it.

Opposite Page: Haying, 1940. This photo is representative of the haying process Dad describes in his story. It was taken on the farm two miles south of St. Anthony, which was owned by David Birch (Mom's grandfather).

In the photo David (upper left) stands with a pitchfork on top of a haystack waiting to position hay, which is being moved into position by his hired hand, Clyde. Jess Birch, David's son, is standing on the hay wagon below (lower right) steadying the incoming load with a "trip" rope. After the hay was dumped onto the stack, Jess would use the trip rope to pull the Jackson fork back over the hay wagon then the derrick horse operator (which was Versal's duty on his parent's farm as a boy but out of sight in this photo) would lower the fork by backing up the horse when given the OK and the fork would be loaded with more hay.[22]

This Page: Versal's notation for this photo, which he took in the St. Anthony area in the 1960s: "A typical "A" frame derrick used to lift hay onto a stack."



Dynamite!

Dynamite! The very word strikes horror into one's heart and at the same time creates a desire for some adventure. I've heard my father tell of the many times he utilized black powder and dynamite to blast out and remove lava formations from the Erie Canal. Being the water master, he kept blasting caps and dynamite near at hand for immediate use.

Occasionally, he and I would use such to improve the smaller ditches on our own property. I've held a three foot drill many times as Dad pounded on it with a double jack or sledge hammer. We worked with rhythm as I turned the large metal shaft each time Dad struck the top of it by forcefully swinging the large hammer.

We would work this way until a hole was made deep into the solid rock we expected to remove. This hole was about one and one-fourth inches in diameter and usually twelve to eighteen inches deep. After the hole was completed and the loose particles of rock had been removed, then the fun began. Sometimes a stick of dynamite was simply inserted in the hole and a blasting cap was placed with it but usually we did it thus:

"Now, take this green frayed stick and thoroughly clean that hole," Dad said.

I quickly did as I was told and then I watched with wonder as Dad expertly prepared the charge.

"Give me one of those sticks of dynamite — Be Careful!! Don't Jar it or drop it. There, now, watch me."

Dad carefully cut the protective wrapping from the paper-covered stick of dynamite. He then placed a part of the yellowish, wax-like material in the open hole. Then very carefully he inserted a green section of willow stick into the opening and gently, though positively, packed the powder into the bottom of the hole. This process was repeated until the hole was packed to within about three inches of the opening.

"Now, give me one of those blasting caps in that can," he said.

I gingerly opened the cloth-lined can and removed one of the small copper cylinders.

"Good, now cut about eighteen inches of fuse from that roll over there."

He pointed to a rolled-up mass of black cord-like material. This was the slow-burning fuse used to ignite the blasting cap, which in turn caused the powder of the stick to detonate.

Dad inserted the end of the eighteen-inch section of



fuse into the open end of the blasting cap. Then he frayed the opposite end of the fuse so it would start to burn easily. Next he placed the cap and fuse into the open hole. Then very carefully more of the dough-like powder was packed about the inserted cap and fuse.

"Now get a full shovelful of that mud over there. I did as he directed. This mud was patted over the hole and around the protruding fuse. Then he and I placed a heavy section of lava rock over the whole thing. Only the frayed end of the fuse was visible.

"Let's pack everything over there behind that ledge," Dad said as he pointed to a large outcropping of rock about one hundred yards away.

I picked up the tools and Dad carefully picked up the unneeded dynamite and accessories. All these were placed in a safe place far from the blasting area.

"Now son, come with me and I'll show you how to ignite the charge."

Eagerly I followed Dad as he led the way to the zero area.

"Now, when I say run, then you hightail to those rocks back there and don't wait for me." There was finality in his voice as he said this.

Kneeling down beside the protruding fuse he struck a match against the lava rock. Then, as I watched in wide-eyed amazement, he held the open flame near the frayed end of the fuse. Here the material burned calmly at first then it sputtered, then shot hot sparks from the end.

"Run fast!" Dad yelled as he raised to leave. I headed for the protection of the ledge from which I looked back towards Dad. He was running as best he could, being slowed by rheumatism. I had outdistanced him easily.

But soon he was with me and we took snuggled-up positions behind the rock wall. We waited — ten seconds, another ten seconds — I held my breath — five more seconds. I looked at Dad. He was peering amusedly at me. Then my eardrums pounded as I heard the blast and watched pieces of rock flying through the air and over my head.

Then all was quiet. We walked over to the blasted-out area. Success. The huge rocklike obstruction was gone.



Lava rock formations on the old Davis ranch, 2008.

In the Upper Snake River Valley of southern Idaho, where Gould settled, the area is covered by lava beds. When he began farming the virgin land, Gould faced the daunting challenge of turning the barren lava fields, which were covered with sagebrush and greasewood, into productive farmland. Blasting away lava outcroppings was only the first step in that labor-intensive process. Getting water to the parched land was another colossal project.

Versal wrote of his father's efforts:

"Much of the land was useless for production as it was covered with lava formations, drifting sand, and sagebrush. I have seen this property as it was utilized by others, including myself. At no time have I seen it done so beautifully and successfully as was managed by my Father. . . . I remember with great pride how I assisted my Father at a time when they [his ranches] were truly productive."[23]

Swimmin'

I don't recall when I learned to swim. I must have developed slowly at an early age. The nearby Last Chance Canal was no doubt the original learning area. As I became more proficient I joined others as we went to bigger and deeper bodies of water.

As a young boy I joined Wayne, Floyd, Warren, and Dutch as we swam and bathed in the cool water of the Last Chance Canal. This was regularly done after a hot and hard day of work in the fields.

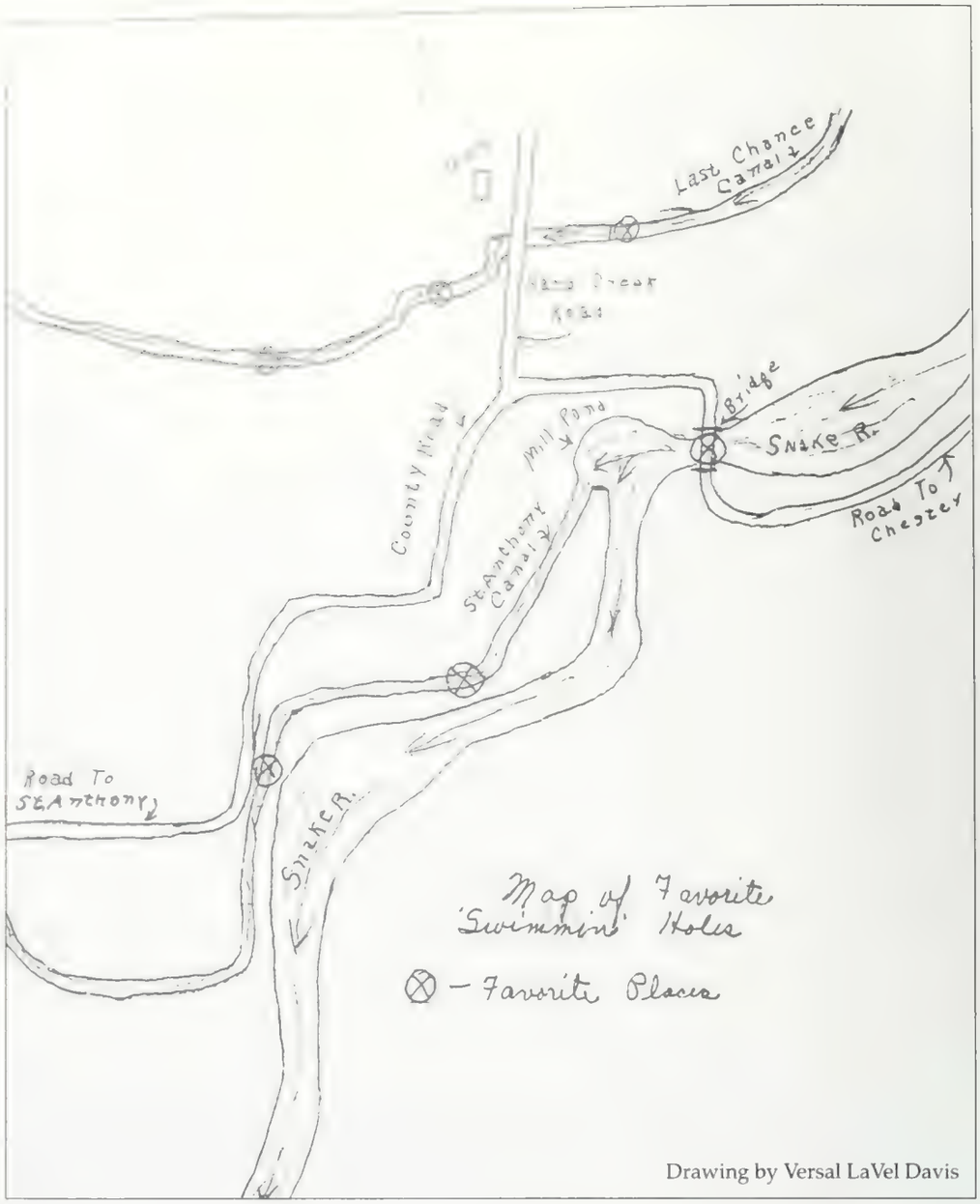
At this early age I did not wear a swim suit of any kind and neither did the others. In fact, I did not own a pair of trunks for swimming until I became about fifteen years of age. The areas where we had our fun were off the beaten paths and were quite protected by trees and brush.

As time went by I acquired a swim suit and then made special trips to St. Anthony where I joined many city residents as we swam in the deep and turbulent waters of the Snake River where it flowed through narrow openings between the lava formations (see map p. 168). This scenic and popular spot is and was very popular because of its location in the center of town and bordering the unique city park. But, as a farm boy, I did most of my "swimmin'" in the local canals where we were seldom seen or bothered.

Warren, my oldest brother, used to cut my hair close to my head. This was advantageous to me because I could break the rules and go swimmin' several times a day. My shaved head would soon dry and no one would know the difference.

However, I carried this game too far one time and it cost me a humiliating whipping. This special episode is recorded in my personal history [see pp. 416-418].

Prior to our marriage, Thelma and I, together with several friends, would swim in the large St. Anthony Canal that had its beginning near the steel bridge which spanned the Snake River. This canal was deep and quite wide and it was great fun to enter it well upstream and then swim and float for a mile or more as it carried us along. We would continue the float until we reached a bridge or nearby road when we would exit and then walk back to where we entered.



Drawing by Versal LaVel Davis

The bridge area of the Snake River became a popular spot also as we dived from the bridge structure. The river was very deep, directly beneath the bridge, and it presented a challenge to some of us as we dived to the bottom, picked up a small rock or two and returned to the surface. The small objects, in one's hands, proved that the bottom had been reached.

After our marriage we regularly went to this bridge area and swam or went boating. It became a popular picnic spot as we were joined by friends and relatives.

Opposite page, bottom left: **Versal (19), Myrdean Clark (in dress), and an unidentified woman (in swim suit)** on the black steel bridge by the Mill Pond, August 1934. A few months before this photo was taken, Versal had gone on his first date with Myrdean's good friend, Thelma Hall, a relationship which soon developed into love and was followed by marriage two years later.

Versal LaVel Davis



Davis family members swimming in "the Channel" by Keefer Park in St. Anthony during a Versal & Thelma Davis family reunion in the summer of 1992.

The Channel, one of Mom and Dad's favorite swimming locations when they were young, flows on the south side of the island-park (now called Keefer Park) in the middle of St. Anthony.

My brother, Brent, recalled swimming in this area of the river when he was a child living in St. Anthony:

The Snake River ran through the middle of town, and the community had a pretty nice park on an island right in the center of downtown. We took swimming lessons on the grass and in the shallow water for a year or two (see newspaper photo p. 166), but spent most of the time swimming everywhere else as well. We learned to swim underwater with our eyes open and collected lots of freshwater clams.

On the other side of the park, however, part of the river ran through a fairly deep rocky gorge. It was pretty much reserved for everyone of high school age or older, but we spent plenty of time there over the years, as well, jumping or diving off the rocks, swimming in the tricky currents, and fishing . . . The Snake River was treacherous, however, since in the spring it would get fast and deep from spring runoff. The water would boil through the channel part of the river with all kinds of currents and whirlpools. It was really dangerous. . . Sometimes the more adventurous ones would swim into whirlpools, be sucked under by the currents, and pop up 100 feet downstream where the water slowed down. . . . All in all it was risky business. Every year or two someone would drown in that stretch of river, usually when the water was high.[24]

Empathy For Horses

[illegible] Journal III p. 67]

Before the more extended use of the automobile, it was common to utilize other forms of locomotion. Horses filled this need both in summer and winter. The story as related here was incidental to the more cold of winter time.

"All right Dad, I'll get the team ready," I replied to my father after he had instructed me to round up Babe and Tess prior to using this favorite team to pull the open bob-sleigh.

I drove the two horses into the log horse barn where I slipped a halter on each, then secured them to a suitable pole, which was part of the feed manger. I reached for the large neck of Babe, a bay mare and mother of Tess, then removed the harness assembly from a large hook on a beam nearby. I deftly placed this upon the patient horse, then fastened all the various straps and buckles. I repeated this same procedure with Tess in like manner. In each case the [illegible] harnesses was stiff because of the extreme cold.

Now I was ready to remove the halter of each horse and place the bridle in its stead. Babe seemed to sense a problem as she shook her head and stamped her front feet.

"Hey, cut that out and settle down," I commanded as I tried to slip the bridle over the horses nose and head. But still, I was faced with defeat. Then I reasoned that the steel bit might be quite cold and the animal did not want such in its mouth. So I simply cupped both of my hands over the steel bit section of the bridle. My gloved hands were supposed to warm the metal a bit. It was then that I thoughtlessly did something that proved to be very silly. I reasoned that the metal would be warmed enough but I elected to find out for sure before placing it in the horse's mouth. So I simply raised the metal object to my own mouth and placed my tongue against it. Immediately, my moist, extended tongue became frozen to the cold bit!!!



The Gould and Alice Davis family on their horse-drawn sleigh, ca. 1920. Front Left to Right: Wayne Davis, Albert Olsen, Floyd Davis, Leona Morgan, Warren Davis, Versal Davis, Grandmother Alice Davis holding Alice Shosted, Vera Loveland, Leatha Shosted. Standing: Henry Olsen, Merlie Olsen holding Damaris, Grandfather John Gould Davis driving. (Identifications made in Merlie's handwriting below photo in her *Book of Remembrance*.)

[illegible]

Versal Gould Davis

I was a prisoner of my own making. I tried to withdraw from the cold metal. But such became painful. What was I to do? I could have carried the attached bridle to the house where room warmth would have caused release but my thought of embarrassment stopped my doing such. So I gritted my teeth and literally pulled away from the attachment. Finally, I managed to free myself but it was very painful. Upon inspection of the steel bit I could see part of my tongue still attached. My mouth was now bleeding because of the damage to my organ therein.

Yes. I did learn to be more compassionate with the horses as I more fully realized the physical torment the animals endured at times when the weather was very cold. I developed great empathy in this respect.

P.S.- An interesting point regarding winter cold and horses. It was not unusual to see icicles hanging from the nostrils of horses as they were being used while pulling sleighs. This was because the animals breathed heavily and the moisture from such would condense and there freeze as ice. This produced attached icicles, which sometimes would grow to several inches in length. These, however, did not cause pain or discomfort to the animal.

lazy animal would notice what was coming and would leap forward and escape the painful contact. Then he would watch with turned head until Warren had placed the weapon in its carrying place. Then, immediately, he would assume the lazy lagging position again. No amount of repeats ever seemed to help.

Warren also used Ole Peter as a saddle mule. Every time Warren seated himself in the saddle, the mule had to be subdued. He would back furiously for a minute or two and then he would be very docile. But Warren rather enjoyed this performance.

It was difficult to keep this animal in an ordinary wire fenced enclosure. He would literally lay down on one side and then kick and wriggle his way under the bottom wire of a common barbed wire fence.

[Despite his idiosyncrasies], Ole Peter was yet used a great deal as he was paired with "Sally," a female mule. These two were hooked to a common buggy in summer and, when necessary, to a light bob sleigh in winter.

All the farm animals, like humans, were different. Each had to be handled in separate and individual manners. But they are remembered and revered as having been living, breathing creatures of God. I can truly say that none of them was ever unduly abused.

Ole Peter

(Flashback. Journal III, p. 164)

Years ago, when I was a very young boy, I recall the many horses and mules that Dad kept on the ranch. These were necessary as they were used to provide power for the several farm machines.

Motorized tractors were not readily available so Dad kept the draft animals to be used in various seasons of need.

My older brothers utilized the animals as they pulled plows, harrows, drills, grain binders, hay equipment, wagons, and ditchers, etc. .

I distinctly remember a certain mule we called "Peter." This animal was one of the craftiest creatures I have ever seen. I remember how Warren used him, with other mules and horses, to pull a grain binder. He would shirk and pull nothing — then when Warren would try to punish him by striking him with a large nut attached by a heavy cord to a long cane pole, the



A mule is a cross between a male donkey and a female horse. The male mule is called a jack and the female is a jenny. Mules are bred for work because they generally have more stamina than horses, are more sure-footed, and more resistant to disease. Mules are cautious and temperamental and require expert handling to perform well. Both sexes are sterile.

George Washington preferred mules over horses as work animals. Washington spoke disparagingly of horses when he pronounced, "Horses eat too much, work too little, and die too young."[28]

School Daze

Previously recorded in my personal journal on [illegible]

Earlier I have recorded some of my school experiences. However, in this entry I will try to present a more comprehensive account.

I was tutored in the early grades, by very capable teachers. I am deeply indebted to them for a good foundation of the basic needs. I have since been able to build upon this solid foundation as I have read much, written considerably and learned much through life. This could not have transpired without a good start.

I entered the old Central School when I was six years of age. This was (it no longer exists) a large, three-story, brick edifice which housed all the grades, one through eight, plus high school.

I will remember my first day as I boarded the horse-drawn school wagon and then rode three-and-a-half miles to the school. Here, I was directed by others as I fearfully entered the first grade room. My apprehensions soon alleviated, however, as I was warmly greeted by my teacher, a Miss West. She was wonderful and my ability to learn was greatly enhanced by her caring and friendly attention to me.

I truly enjoyed school and learning. I do not boast [illegible] automatically advanced twice as I was allowed to skip one-half year in second grade and also the same in the third.

Phonics became precious to me as I developed a sound base in reading. Because of this, I was able to read and learn at any time as printed matter was available to me. I don't recall that I studied a great deal at home but I did read a tremendous amount as I read many novels and stories. This was done by the reflected light of a common kerosene lamp.

I rode to school on the common carrier provided, by contract, known as a school wagon or school sleigh. The weather determined which was used. Later, a common truck with a canvas top and cover was put into use. At times I even walked to and from school.

I was promoted through all the grades, one through eight. During this time I was a classmate with someone who I never dreamed would become my wife, mother of eight children and hopefully, my eternal companion. I truly and honestly state here that her deportment and scholarly abilities were very manifest. I can very easily remember how she excelled. I've often wondered how each of us would have reacted had we known then, that we would become man and wife. It seems incredulous that events shaped a future of great love and happiness as she and I have truly had



Vera LaVal Davis



3rd Grade, ~~Lincoln~~ Central School St. A. Idaho
About 1924

a wonderful existence together.

After graduation, from the 8th grade, I was then permitted to enter high school. This I did and enjoyed very much. I completed two years, the freshman and sophomore, and then started the 3rd, or junior, year. Again, I state here, that my grades were commendable and to have continued would have been ideal. However, ranch needs were such that I had to terminate my formal training. Dad was physically unable to handle the ranch chores. My older brothers were married and gone. So, of necessity, I took over the labor needs of the farm and cattle.

This year, 1984, Thelma and I joined several others as we celebrated our 50th class reunion. This was great as we met and reacquainted ourselves with others. So far as I know, Thelma and I are the only living duo-classmates.

Although I did not formally finish high school, yet I have always approved of acquiring more knowledge. Much can be done, even after school years are over. I've approved and supported Thelma in her insatiable desire to learn more and more about the undeniable truths of life and living.

Versal's third grade class at Central School, 1924. Versal is 4th from the left on the top row. In his notation for this photograph, he wrote, *"I'm probably wearing my knickerbocker pants."*

In a rough draft of his autobiography, dated Dec. 20, 1964, Versal recounted his initial dread of formal schooling when he was six years old but then philosophically wrote: *I must have enjoyed it [school] because I was automatically advanced a half year on two different occasions — one-half of second grade and one-half of third grade. . . . In appreciation I remember all my teachers and only wish I could now thank them for their untiring efforts to make me excel.*

Opposite Page: Central School, St. Anthony, Idaho. Photo, mid-70s.

Built in 1913, Central School had three stories and 24 classrooms; grades 6, 7 and 8 occupied the top floor; the high school filled the middle floor; and grades 1-5 used the bottom, which also included a gymnasium. The school served the community on the north side of the Snake River, which divided the town into two halves.

"Central School, where I spent all my school years with the exception of one year at the Lincoln School. Central School was a combination grade and high school." (Dad's notation for this photo.)

After the Dogs

I [illegible] The conveyances we used were very different from the common, yellow, streamlined [illegible].

In winter a common bobsleigh pulled by a team of horses was used. A board-like box was placed over the runners. A canvas top provided cover. On coldest days a small woodburning heater provided warmth. Straw was placed on the floor to snuggle ones feet into. I have often run behind one of these just to keep warm. Also I've ridden the extended rear runner of the sleigh as it glided away.

When I first entered school I rode in a similar affair except the bobsleigh was replaced by a common, narrow-wheeled, wood-spoked wagon. This also had the narrow box lined with plank seats and covered with a canvas canopy. This actually resembled the pioneer "prairie schooner" of earlier days.

Later, if snow was not deep or if there was none at all, we were privileged to ride in a compartment arranged on the flat bed of an old truck. This was a lumber-framed, canvas-covered section with rows of plank seats across the bed of the truck.

For many years this school wagon contract was awarded to a near neighbor, George Singleton.

Now a story: Every year, in the month of February, the Ashton Dog Derby was held each year. The small town of Ashton, which is about 12 miles [illegible] nthony, sponsored this classic event annually. [illegible] teams from western U.S., Canada, and even Alaska [illegible] ntered into this highly celebrated racing event.

Well, it so happened that George Singleton had a son-in-law who owned a dog team. This necessitated the need for a conveyance to transport this collection of dogs to the race site. The covered truck bed, which normally served as the compartment we school kids rode in, was utilized on this occasion as a dog house.

This event [the Ashton Dog Derby] took place on a Saturday. The event transpired in a normal manner. The dogs were carried to Ashton, were organized into a competing unit, raced commendably against similar opposition, then were returned home.

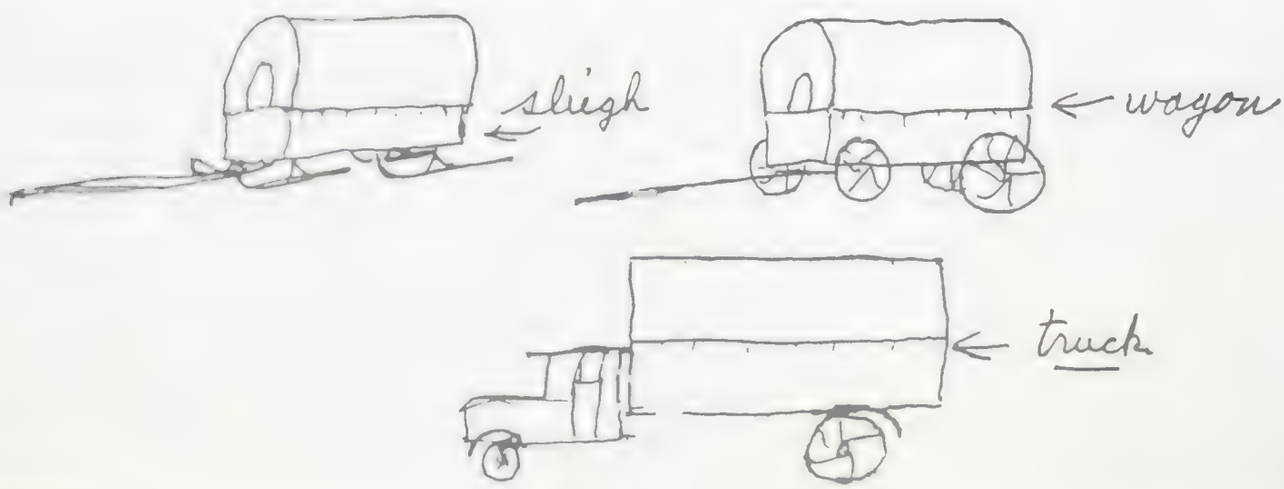
Sunday came and went and Monday morning brought a new school day. The modified old truck made its several stops to pick up each of us as regular riders.

I don't know why, but the interior of the truck had not been cleaned after hosting the team of dogs on the previous Saturday. Needless-to-say, the mess and stench was terrible!! However, our greatest problem became apparent when we entered our several classrooms. [The other students could smell us coming.] It was easy to understand why we schoolbus kids were shunned and became targets of ridicule.



A covered, heated school sleigh, which transported students to school in nearby Newdale, ca. 1921.

Dad's drawings of student transportation during his school years.



Ferral La Rue Davis

The Southsiders

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 119)

The small town of St. Anthony is divided by the Snake River which flows generally from east to west. As the city grew it became necessary to split the school zones into the two sections naturally divided by the river. The name, *southsiders*, became familiar as did the appellation, *northsiders*. Schoolwise, definite sides evolved which caused some problems between the young people of each group. Each had its own grade school. The north faction (mine) called its alma mater the Central School. The south group named its place of learning the Lincoln School.

In 1924 the Central School was somewhat overcrowded. So, to ease the problem, the school board decreed that all children, 5th graders and under, who rode in the school wagon from the north side, would be transported through town to the Lincoln School. This arrangement involved about 20 students, who were near neighbors of mine. Of course, I, as a 4th grader, was numbered among them.



Drawing by Twila Davis Bird

A local newspaper addressed unrest and dislike occasionally exhibited between people who lived north and south of the river in the 1920s with the following commentary:

"St. Anthony is going to be like so many other towns divided by a river. The whole town will suffer if the warring factions don't decide to join forces for the common good and cooperate in building one town united in its projects and opportunities."[26]

I don't suppose the school board realized the potential problems involved. The assignment to attend the south side school was apparently helpful in dividing attendance but we tough guys from the north side immediately raised our flag of defense and of offense. Those southsiders, though numerous, were not going to push us around. We had our dignity and freedom and we intended to keep them.

After a few days of attendance, we had built up such a resentment that each morning, after unloading of the school bus, a line would be marked. We, the northsiders, would align ourselves on one side and dare any or all southsiders to cross over.

Of course, this challenge was met and a general free-for-all fight would ensue. Black eyes, bloody noses, and bruises were common on both sides.

We had individual differences of opinion whether justified or not. These often-petty disagreements led to physical confrontation, which had to be settled "in the alley." At least once every week a fight would take place near the school area. This was usually in an alley across the street from the Central School. Teachers did not have any jurisdiction there so these entertainment features were scheduled there after school hours.

I've watched many of these even though I had to miss the school wagon and therefore walk home. A few times I even painfully walked homeward as I nursed a bloody nose or perhaps a swelling and darkening area of one eye. My only consolation was that I put up a good fight. Sometimes I felt like a conquering hero as I rejoiced in being the victor in a good scrap.

This vendetta continued for the entire school year after which we were never required to attend the Lincoln School again.

Incidentally, the southsiders were required to attend the Central School after the 5th grade. I smile when I reflect back on all this. Many of those whom I had fought with [later] became some of my best friends. In fact, years later, a brilliant southsider at Lincoln School became my wife and mother of our eight children.

A page from Thelma Hall Davis' handwritten history regarding the year she and Versal attended 4th grade together at Lincoln School.

Sept 1925 St. Anthony, Idaho

- Our historic (to me) Lincoln School on the South Side.

Versal and I attended the 4th grade in this room. Taught by Verda Martineau

I attended the 5th grade in this room. Taught by Mrs Hummel.



- Years later (in 1944) I taught the 2nd grade in this room. I was married to Versal.

- In 1925, when Versal and I were in the 4th grade together, we did not associate with each other. Not only was I a newcomer to St. Anthony I was a South Sider! I was soon to learn that South Siders were not as good as North Siders. The Treacherous, meandering Snake River was the dividing line. Versal was a North Sider and came to the Lincoln only because of overcrowding at the Central School. And only for 1 year.

Versal La Rue Davis

A Peanut Bust

(Flashback)

The following incident took place in the Central School of St. Anthony when Thelma and I were classmates in the 8th grade. The 6th, 7th and 8th grades comprised what was then known as the Department Section. Separate teachers were assigned to go to the various rooms to teach the subjects that were assigned to them.

As we students had done before, we planned to have a "peanut bust." This was simply a time when all class members procured a supply of unshelled peanuts, which we kept hidden until the selected teacher entered the room and the door to such was closed. Then, at a signal from a previously appointed student, all would shower or throw peanuts at the just-entered teacher. The teacher's reaction was usually to cancel study time and declare a free-for-all-good-time as we laughed and ate peanuts.

This particular day we planned to bombard Mrs. Warner, a middle-aged lady. She entered the room, closed the door behind her, and then was greeted with whoops and shouts as a storm of peanuts made her duck her head and place her arms up to protect herself. She was surprised and apparently pleased as she joined us in a fun time for the duration of the class period.

Then things changed. Our next assigned teacher was Miss Astle, a small, red-headed and temperamental type who meant business. We greeted her as we had previously admitted Mrs. Warner. But, all hell broke loose as she immediately grew very angry and scolded us firmly for doing what we did.

Yes, we had study period but it was not effective. We, as a class, lost some of our respect for her. It became difficult to achieve in her class. Somehow, she was no longer one of us.

Versal's "peanut bust" classmates, 1929. Dad's notation for this photo: *"An eighth grade picture. Thelma is 2nd from the right in center row; Dutch is 3rd from left in first row; I am 5th from the right in top row. At the Central School located on the north side of St. Anthony."*



No Sympathy

(Flashback. Journal 1, p. 169)

The horse-drawn, canvas-covered school wagon was on schedule that fall evening as it stopped momentarily to discharge two passengers, namely Alice Shosted, my niece, and me. She was first to exit from the rear of the narrow wagon box and I followed shortly thereafter.

This getting-off-point was at what we commonly called "the corner." It actually was a point where the main county road was intersected by another less used road which was called the Sand Creek Road. We lived about one-quarter mile north on this lateral byway. Our mailbox was secured to the top of a post, which in turn was near the intersection. We kids usually walked the short distance home after picking up any mail.

"Hey you, leave that mail alone. It's my turn to carry it!" I yelled as I noticed Alice extending her hand into the galvanized metal rural box.

"Alice, didn't you hear me?" I exploded more as a warning than a question as she quickly withdrew the contents and started to run up the road.

"You can't have it," I heard her say.

"We'll see about that," I retorted as I made a dash toward her.

She anticipated my move and quickened her movement. I was a little older, about twelve at the time, and I was also faster on foot. I soon caught up and was about to reach forth to grasp her when she, in her haste to elude me, stumbled to the roadbed. I did not have time to avoid her and, as a result, I went crashing over her. I fell forward and landed on my right elbow against the hard ground of the packed vehicle tracks.

I immediately gave up the chase for the mail. I was gasping and writhing in pain as I managed to rise to my feet. I grasped my right arm with my left hand as I tried to ease the torment.

Alice, in the meantime, had triumphantly proceeded up the road, carrying the fought-over letters. I followed, grimacing in pain as I slowly walked toward home.

Mother, noticing my discomfort, asked what was wrong. I showed her my arm and related the brief episode. She inspected the arm and, supposing it to be only bruised, I was soon forgotten. I do not condemn my mother for the oversight because in those days nature was relied upon to correct minor abrasions such as this appeared to be.

That night the arm became more sore and swollen but I did not let anyone know. I was unable to bend the elbow but next morning I went to school as usual. This 90-degree angle condition existed for several weeks before I could use the arm to some extent.

As time went by the soreness left but I was never able to extend the member to its former length. Also, I was never again able to cast stones or a bail without some joint pain. A catch or lock would occur, which many times, required days to correct. As the years went by I was forced to respect the limitations of movement. Thereby, I apparently prevented further damage to it.

About 25 years after I was married I developed what is commonly known as "bone chips" in the joint of the elbow. In 1966, having work insurance, I decided to have a bone specialist diagnose the problem.

"Well, Mr. Davis. you have several pieces of loose bone in the joint area." Dr. Bryner said as he showed the x-ray pictures to me.

"But, Doc, how could that be? I've never broken a bone in my body in my entire life," I emphatically replied.

"Well, I hate to differ with you but do you see that dark line in this area of the joint?"

"Yes," I answered as I began to realize what had happened many years before.

"That is a place where a fracture has some time taken place. The bone chips are fragments from the break and have begun to localize in painful areas." I studied the x-ray picture very carefully as I reminisced and mentally relived what had happened nearly 40 years earlier. All those pain-ridden years I had nursed the arm not knowing that it had actually been fractured in that needless bit of horseplay years ago.

An operation, by Dr. Bryner, corrected most of the problem. However, I still cannot extend the arm to its natural length.

My Special Teacher

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 159)

In 1927, when I was 11, my father was appointed doorkeeper to the House of Representatives in the capital building located in Boise, Idaho. This assignment lasted for about two months (January and February), which was the ordinary time period of the legislation body.

It was decided that my mother and I would accompany him to Boise and maintain residence in a hotel there. To do this, however, commitments had to be made regarding my grade school studies. Assignments were prearranged and I was then permitted to leave the St. Anthony school system and go to Boise. This was a unique arrangement which ultimately proved justified.

After settling in our new residence I, of course, resumed my school work. Dad and Mother assisted some but it soon became apparent that I needed special help. Well, it just so happened that a friend of Warren's, my older brother, lived in Boise. He became aware of my problem and offered to regularly assist in my need. He, therefore, came to our living quarters regularly and gave me great help. Because of this I managed very well and kept up with the lesson schedule. When I returned to St. Anthony and re-entered the school there I was able to immediately resume my regular classwork.

Who was this special teacher? — At this time I cannot recall his name but I remember his physical characteristics very well. He was a tall thin man with a smiling face. He had befriended Warren while in college. And, oh, yes, he only had one arm.

TWILA'S NOTE: The 2010 Idaho State Legislature website describes the responsibilities of a "doorkeeper" thus:

It shall be the duty of the Doorkeeper to prohibit all persons from entering the bar of the Senate except those who by rule or invitation are permitted, and to arrest for contempt all persons outside of the bar or in the gallery found engaged in loud conversation, or otherwise making a noise, to the disturbance of the Senate.[27]



The Idaho State Capitol Building in Boise, Idaho.



Chapter Two

Me 'N Dutch

Versal and Warren Augustus Caplinger — better known by family members as "Dutch" — were constant boyhood companions. They shared most of their growing-up experiences together and remained close until adulthood took them separate ways.

Not only were they best friends, they were also uncle and nephew. Dad, as the uncle, was two years younger than his nephew, Dutch, but the age gap and family hierarchy held no sway in their best-buddy relationship. The two were inseparable, their lives cemented by countless associations involving cap guns, swimming, lickings, horseback riding, hay hauling, slingshots, camping, hunting, fishing, farm work, school, and family.

The accounts in this section could have been included in the previous chapter about Dad's boyhood or the following one regarding his teen years, but Dutch's presence in these stories deserved a separate treatment, one revealing the special association these two young men enjoyed.



Fred Caplinger and Merlie Davis Caplinger, ca. 1911.
Dutch was the son of Versal's oldest sister, Merlie, and her second husband, Fred Caplinger. Merlie's marriage difficulties kept her and her children living either near (or with) her parents, Gould and Alice, on the home ranch for years, a condition which allowed Versal and Dutch to form their unusually close friendship.

Opposite page: **Versal, 19, (right) and Dutch, 21,** on the lava rock shore of the Snake River island (now called Keefer Park), in the middle of St. Anthony, Idaho, 24 July 1934.

The Bull Fight

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 184)

As Dad was astride Tony, our family saddle horse, he noticed, far up the sagebrush bordered road, a strange occurrence. He was making one of his regular horseback rides to the head of the Dewey Canal.

A lumbering horse was having difficulty, while supporting a lone rider, in staying ahead of a large red durham bull.

Dad watched for a second or two then he promptly jumped from the saddle, went to the side of the wagon road, and picked up a fist-sized boulder or two.

The rider was obviously in peril.

"Grandpa, help me!" He exclaimed as he rushed closer.

Dad stood firmly in the center of the road where he awaited the oncoming parties. The horse and rider went by then Dad took a firm stance and waited until the charging bull was close enough to oppose effectively.

Then Dad raised his right arm and in true baseball-pitcher style he cast the heavy stone. The hand-flung projectile struck the heavy board, which had been placed across the animals eyes. The board was broken and a section then dangled from each horn of the bull. This surprise encounter had not caused any physical pain but the sudden breakage of the shield had caused the animal to suddenly stop. Another well-aimed rock served in turning the animal as it left the road and retreated into the brush.



Warren Augustus (Dutch) Caplinger

The lone rider, who happened to be Dutch, was now safe as he hurried on to the safety of the farmyard ahead.

The board, which was attached to the horns of this dangerous animal, had been placed there to restrict the forward vision of the bull. This was supposed to inhibit the animal's sight and therfore stop its tendency to charge any opponent. This had actually helped in this case as the maddened animal was required to hold its head high, in an unnatural manner, as it charged after Dutch and his horse. Because of this it was running slower than it would have without the incumbrance.

Dad's ability to accurately throw a baseball paid off in this daring encounter with this neighborhood animal.

This bull was eventually sold to a butcher. I personally remember this tempestuous animal. It belonged to a neighbor, George Singleton.

Our Bulging Pockets

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 57)

Dad used to grow many acres of seed peas. These were harvested in the fall and sold to various seed pea companies which were located in St. Anthony.

These peas grew well in the cooler climate and were very good to eat as fresh green peas. Mother used to bottle many of them, but, to me, the fresh green ones were the best.

Even now, 50 years or more later, I still enjoy these as I grow and harvest them in my private garden.

As a growing boy I would haunt the pea fields watching for the first tender pods. Then as they matured I would eat until I felt I would burst.

Dutch and I would often join together as we made these safaris. We would eat all we could, then before leaving, we would fill our pockets until we looked absurd.

After the storage supply was gone, we would usually go for a swim then head back to the pea patch again. How we consumed so many of these, I'll never know, but we did.

Also, I believe we must have had cast iron stomachs because I cannot recall ever becoming ill because of the amount we ate.

Some of the varieties most planted were: Perfection, Giant Alaska, Lincoln, and Early Perfection.

I don't suppose that Mom wondered why I sometimes ate a light dinner or supper. She knew!!

Gould proudly stands in a field of peas, ca. August 1930.

St. Anthony's soil and climate conditions were suited to growing peas and beginning in 1910 the pea industry there grew to be the largest in the United States. Gould and many other area farmers made seed peas their cash crop.

During its heyday, area farmers annually devoted 20-30,000 acres of land to growing seed peas — peas cultivated for seed rather than for consumption. Peas were grown, dried, and packaged in seed packets (like any other vegetable seeds) and shipped all over the world. At one time there were four large seed pea warehouses in St. Anthony which kept three or four hundred women busy throughout the winter, sorting the highest percent germinating seed pea grown anywhere in the world.

Seed peas remained an important agricultural and employment focus in St. Anthony until the early 1950s. Then insects brought the boom days to a halt. And by then farmers had discovered the cash value of potatoes, another crop ideally suited for the area.[1]



Chickening Out
(Flashback)

Hey, Dutch, look at those cliffs over there. I'll bet there are some swallow nests in 'em."

"Yea, boy, let's find out," Warren replied.

So we left the rocky bank of the Snake River and went around a sharp turn of the meandering waterway. On the east side, farther down the river, were some perpendicular lava rock formations which extended two to three hundred feet above the turbulent water below. We were soon at the base of the formation and were surveying the mass to determine how to climb it.

"Here are some holes we can put our feet into," Dutch offered.

"There are some over here too. I'll betcha I get to the top first," I challenged. Thereupon we started up the vertical barrier.

This whole formation is situated in the lower parts of a deep canyon of the Snake River in the Targhee National Forest of Idaho. The [particular] area, which we were in, was in the bottom of Bear Gulch about five miles north of Warm River. Warren and Wayne, my older brothers, were fishing in the river and Dutch and I were simply 'along'.

We were exploring and, of course, the cliff was there waiting to be conquered. As we ascended we became more aware of the danger we courted. We were not experienced and we had no equipment other than our hands and feet. I remember that I wished I had never attempted the climb but personal bravery was at stake so I continued.

At one point, about one hundred feet above the river, I stopped to look about for a new handhold. I gazed downward and became terrified as I envisioned myself falling to the jagged rocks below. I grasped the rock tightly as I slowly regained control of myself. Then I did something, which I now feel was not a cowardly move. I hollered to Dutch saying, "Dutch, I think I'll climb back down. I can't find another handhold."

"Me too," I immediately heard him respond. His voice echoed his relief that we should abandon our attempt. So we slowly retraced our efforts as we descended to the water's edge. We were both trembling when we soberly looked at each other. Neither of us accused the other of chickening out.

We soon rejoined Warren and Wayne, whom we refrained from telling about our activities. Also, Mother and Dad were never informed of our stupid attempt.

Our Mosquito Repellent
(Flashback)

Dutch was busily punching holes in his five-gallon can. I was bending a suitable wire and fitting it as a carrying handle for my [own] perforated container. As we [worked] we were also busy slapping at hordes of mosquitoes, which surrounded us.

"These blasted Mohawks are trying to eat me alive," Dutch exclaimed.

"Let's hurry and get these things fired up. Then we'll show 'em." I replied.

"There, mine is ready for the straw. How about yours?"

"Yea, mine too. Let's go," I countered.

We picked up our weapons and ran to the old straw stack in back of the farmyard. There we packed the buckets with the straw until they were filled to about two inches of the top rim.

"There, I've got enough," I said.

"Me too, let's get our weeds now."

As we passed the garden we picked some pigweeds and redroots, which bordered it. These were placed tightly on top of the straw in each pail.

"Now we're ready for 'em," Dutch said.

"Here is a match for you. I've got mine," I said as I handed a sulphur match to him.

We struck our matches against the heels of our shoes and then applied the flame to the dry straw. This was done by inserting the fired match in a hole in the bottom of the bucket.

Soon white, acrid smoke was emanating from the top of the containers. The plume grew more dense. Then we swished it around us.

Why? Believe it or not this was a very good, mosquito-fighting weapon. The only problem — one had to withstand the smell of the smoke, but this was often better than fighting the bugs.

The straw would burn slowly without flame [but would produce a great deal of] smoke. The green matter was to keep the straw from bursting into flame.

"Grandma said for us to go through the house with these" Dutch informed me.

"Oh boy, me first," I agreed as I ran toward the kitchen door.

A quick pass through the house soon drove the bugs outside. The mosquitoes were whipped, but now, what about the dense smoke in the house?

Oh well, one didn't have to continually strike at the Mohawks anyway.

No Tires? So What!

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 150)

Dutch and I looked at that sad, wheeled object lying on the ground in front of us. We were wondering how we could have some fun with it.

It was what was left of a bicycle which had belonged to Wayne. He had discarded it for two very good reasons: the drive chain was missing and there were no [rubber] tires mounted on the [round] wood-framed wheels.

"I guess we could push each other around," I offered.

"Let's try it. You push me first," Dutch replied.

Well, we tried that but it required more real labor than was justified so we gave up on that idea.

"I know what we can do," Dutch said. "We can roll it up the road to that hill above the ditch. Then we can roll it to the top and ride it down."

"Yea, man, come on," I excitedly exclaimed.

Then up the road we went taking turns pushing the awkward contraption. Soon we came to the hill, rolled the bike to the top, and then argued as to who would be the first to conquer the downhill grade.

I won the argument and eagerly straddled the rickety affair. I started down and Dutch gave me a grudging assist.

The wood rims ground in the loose dirt of the road. The wheels wobbled back and forth as I tried to gain speed. I managed to descend to the bottom of the steep grade but no coasting took place.

Working hard, I pushed it back to the top and told Dutch he was welcome to ride the darn thing.

He did so, as I had done. When we finally got back home the dream bike was discarded and old [rubber, automobile] tires became our source of thrill. We [curled up inside these] as they rolled downhill.



Versal (4) and Dutch (6), 1919..

I'm Branded

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 135)

The sun rose that morning and flooded the whole country with a cheery glow. The air was crisp as it had been for several days. Freezing temperatures had frozen the pond water and created a clear, smooth and hard surface — one just right to skate on. So Dutch and I picked up our clamp-on ice skates, exited from the yard, went across the canal bridge then turned toward the pond, which was about one-fourth mile south and west. This pond area was an overflow of the Last Chance Canal and was about 200-feet wide and one-fourth mile long. Near the north end by the canal there was a large lava rock. It was a convenient place to sit upon as we adjusted and clamped the ice skates to our regular shoes.

"Boy, these sure oughta rip that ice," Dutch remarked

as he turned the key even tighter.

"Yea, man, I'll race you to the fence on the other end," I replied as I stood confidently on my newly sharpened steel skates.

"Hey, Dark, you wait for me. It's not fair to have a head start."

I glided to the rock from which we started as we sped to the pond's end south of us.

Dutch beat me to the barbed wire fence, which spanned the south end of the frozen pond. He then sat upon the taut barbed wire, which was at ideal height for resting upon. I quickly followed suit as I soon reached the same place.

We were gasping for breath as we swung forward and backward, while [seated] side by side on the steel strand. Our feet were resting on the ice beneath us. After a moment or so I arose and performed a few fancy stunts while Dutch watched.

"Hey, watch me do this one," I said as I placed my feet in position for a fancy maneuver. I was doing fine until my feet, with skates [attached], suddenly slid backwards. I fell forward with my gloved hands outstretched to cushion my fall. But my head, with chin forward struck the solid ice between my outstretched arms. Then all went blank!!

"Hey, Dark, let's play hockey for a while," Dutch remarked as he rose from the fence.

"Come on. Quit fooling around," He said again as I still lay on the ice.

Still, I did not move so Dutch glided over to me and grabbed my foot as if to tease me. In so doing he noticed a pool of freezing blood near my mouth as the blood spread upon the ice.

"Hey Dark, you got a good one didn't you. It serves you right for smarting off." But I didn't hear all this banter. I was dead out.

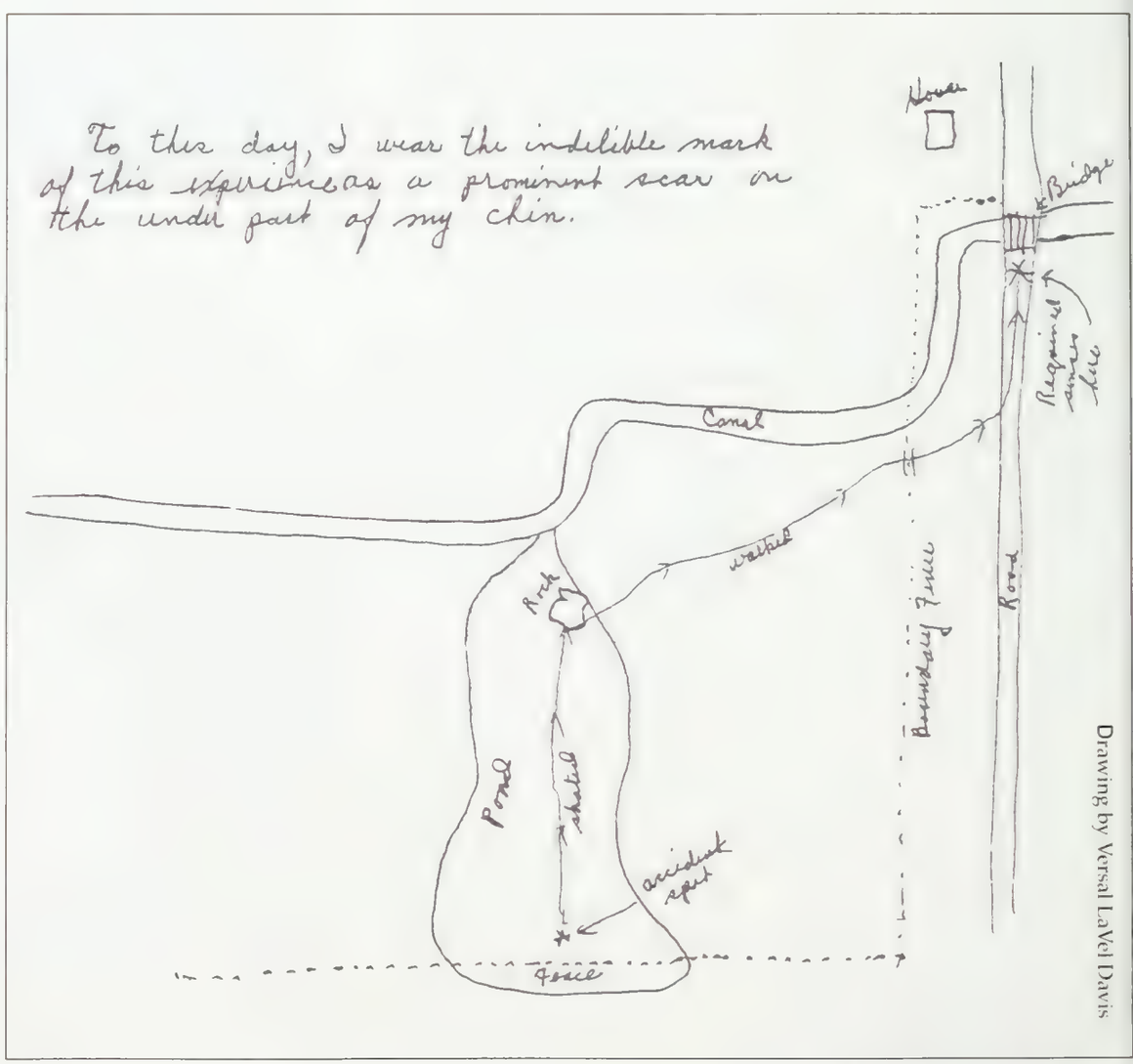
The story is told by Dutch that in a moment or so I regained consciousness and arose to my feet. However, I do not remember anything that happened after striking the ice. He told me later that I skated back to the rock, removed my skates and walked with him as we retraced our steps back home. Blood was dripping from my chin and falling upon the ground. We had just climbed through a fence and were about to cross the canal bridge when —

"Holy smokes, where are we?" I blurted out as I snapped back to normality. "Hey my chin hurts! What happened?"

"Boy you sure took a good one," Dutch replied. "We'd better let grandma fix you up."

As told by Dutch, I had actually skated, after the accident, to the north end of the pond, removed my skates, absent-mindedly walked to the boundary fence, climbed through such, and continued on until we had neared the bridge. Then I had suddenly regained full control of my senses. I remembered nothing from the fall until just prior to entering the yard.

To this day, I wear the indelible mark of this experience as a prominent scar on the under part of my chin.





Versal regained consciousness near this bridge following his skating accident as described in his Flashback titled "I'm Branded." Photo 2008.

Only Ten Feet Away

(Flashback, Journal V, p. 46)

Nina looked at the small copper cylinder that Dutch held between his fingers. "What are you guys going to do?' she asked.

"We're just going to shoot this," Dutch replied. Little did he know that this statement was going to be a huge misrepresentation. However, Nina, my niece, was satisfied with the answer. She supposed the metal object to be a common detonating cap used with dynamite.

Dutch and I had taken it from its supposed hiding place where Dad kept such as this.

"Come on, let's go," I told Dutch as I started to leave the yard.

"Have you got some matches?" He asked.

"Yea, I've got plenty of 'em."

So we went to the swamp area, crossed on a raised plank section and proceeded on to Bert's pasture area about one-quarter mile from home. Here we gathered some sagebrush, piled it to form a suitable mound for burning, then I ignited the pile and it soon was burning briskly. We let this burn down a bit then we heaped more fuel upon it.

Soon this was burning also and after [it had] settled into a large, red heap of coals, we got set for action.

"I'll make a hole right here in the middle of the fire," I said as I poked a large stick in the center of the hot mass.

"OK, here goes," Dutch said as he dropped the cap in the opening.

We then rushed [back] to a large sagebrush, which we crouched behind. We had just kneeled down, when with a sharp report, the cap exploded. We hadn't had time to become frightened. The blast ripped the entire fire apart and scattered ashes and hot coals in a wide arc which we were dangerously within. After brushing the embers from ourselves, we walked to the blast area. Instead of a fire there was a bowl-shaped hole in the sod. This was about six inches deep.

Laughing about the whole thing we returned to the house where Mother met us in the yard and said, "You two kids have been playing with fire, haven't you?!"

"Well, a little, I guess," we replied.

"Nina told me you had a .22 shell. Did you put that in the fire and make that noise a while ago?"

"Well..uh, uh..sorta," I admitted.

Did she ever learn that the .22 shell was really a high-powered dynamite cap? We surely did not disclose the truth to anyone.

She had been concerned but I've often wondered how she would have reacted had she known the whole truth, including the fact that we were less than ten feet from ground zero.

Yes, Dutch and I were young and dumb, about ten.



The Gould & Alice Davis family pose for this photo on either side of the potato cellar in the rear of their Sand Creek Road home, late summer, 1923.

Left to Right:

Versal LaVel Davis (8)
Vera Venice Shosted (3), Leatha's daughter
John Gould Davis (56)
Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis (45)
Merlie Ina Shosted (1), Leatha's daughter
Floyd Ervin Davis (17)
Warren Corrette Davis (21)
Don Wayne Davis (14)
Fred Caplinger, Merlie's ex-husband
Alice Shosted (4), Leatha's daughter
Vera Jane Davis Loveland (24), pregnant with Dorothy Charlotte, born 19 Oct. 1923
Bert Loveland (22), Vera's husband
Leatha Matilda Davis Shosted (23), divorced
Nina Shosted (7), Leatha's daughter

Absent are Merlie Davis Olsen (29), her third husband Henry Olsen, and her children: Albert Swainston (12), Bernice Caplinger (11), Warren Caplinger (10), and Damaris Olsen (3). Also missing are Vera's oldest two children, Cleova (3) and Norma (1).

Versal LaVel Davis



When she was 70, Merlie Ina Shosted (Dad's niece) shared a few insights about growing up on the Davis ranch. (In this photo she is shown as a one-year-old standing in front of her Grandma Davis):

I was born in her [Grandma Davis'] house. We lived right there with grandma. I was born at three o'clock in the morning. I was only one-and-a-half pounds. And the doctor told my mother, "If you're going to have a baby, have one big enough that you can find her." My mother and grandma carried me on a pillow or in a shoe box. They kept me in front of the oven door.

There were four of us girls who lived with Grandma Davis when Versal was little. And he didn't like that we all stayed at grandma's house. We had whole wheat and jello for breakfast every day. When I was about six-years-old Versal always had his pocket knife out and threatened to cut my ears off all the time. [Once] I was running out to that big cellar-pit of grandma's and I thought potatoes was down in that thing. Grandma Davis really went after him then. I was always afraid to be around Uncle Versal. He was a very lovable guy in his way. But I was too scared. I wouldn't stay alone with him. I wouldn't stay in the same room with him.[2]

Being a Boy

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 160)

I suppose almost everyone has an experience they look back on with some regret, even though it may have been somewhat amusing. The incident recorded next is of such a nature:

"Did Dutch show you how to open that padlock on the front door?" Orville Loveland asked me, as we sat on the steps of my sister Vera's place one moonlit evening.

"Sure, I know I can pick it open," I assured my friend.

"Well, let's sneak up there and see what we can find to eat or drink," He said as he started up the path leading out.

I hesitated momentarily, but not to be out-dared, I joined him.

This was a result of my being with Dutch one day as he assisted his stepfather, Henry Olsen, in doing janitor duties at the large and popular Venice Dance Hall. This special day Dutch showed me how to open the padlock mounted on the double front doors of the large public dance hall. Inside, pop and candy bars were stored in a room to the left of the ticket office. The building itself rested between the county road and a large, deep canal, which flowed in the back. Henry Olsen's house was across the road and slightly to the south.

"Here, shine the light right here," I insisted as we tried to quietly open the lock.

"There, it's coming. . . Good! . . Hot dog! . . . Shh," I added.

Orville quietly opened one door and we stepped triumphantly inside. He then closed the door and we flashed light on the area we were desiring to enter. Money was not our motive; plenty of pop and candy was.

"Oh boy, here is a strawberry [soda] for me. Are you going to try orange?" Orville asked as he tested the contents of his bottle.

After five or six bottles a piece together with bites out of several candy bars, we were starting to feel we had overdone a good thing. So we decided to scram from the premises. We were snapping the padlock closed when we heard, "Hey there, what the h___ are you doing there?" This came from Henry's house across the road.

Orville and I immediately took off down the road headed for his place. Upon looking back we could see and hear Henry as he gained upon us. So, we left the road and took advantage of a ditch lined with willows. Here we were able to elude our pursuer and painfully get back home. When we got there we felt pretty sorry for ourselves as we tried to overcome our fear and our too-full stomachs. Our suffering was probably only part justice for doing what we knew was wrong in the first place.

I'm sure Henry knew who he was chasing that night but he only grinned knowingly at us when he had occasion to see us afterward.



Henry and Merlie Olsen, ca. 1918. Merlie's marriage to Henry Olsen on 3 Jan. 1918 proved to be as unhappy as her previous two marriages. Versal wrote of his sister: *I can truthfully say she [Merlie] had a hard existence. . . . Her three marriages were all disappointing. These, together with ill health, provided great anguish and sorrow. . . . However I also can testify that she was a kind and loving woman. She worked many years doing church work. She was eminently successful and effective as a teacher in the Primary organization. She did a great deal of temple work for which I'm sure she will receive much credit.*[3]

While Others Danced

(Flashback, Journal 3, p. 162)

Ole man Skinner had arranged to display a famous race horse in his beloved Venice Dance Hall. But, who would take care of the physical needs of the critter? It was to be shown inside the building during the 4-hour dance period.

Dutch had learned of this need and asked me to help him. It was agreed that each of us would receive $1.00 for this needed-but-distasteful service.

Well-suited buckets were provided and placed where they could immediately be put into service. Two of us could manage this task quite well. . . but, Dutch left the scene of action'!!

Now I was alone and I swear that horse had eaten and drunk enough for ten animals. To be in the right place at the right time was a constant effort and after the ordeal was over and the horse removed, I decided that never again would I be a nursemaid to such again. Incidentally, because Dutch deserted, we were never paid our contract amount.



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson

All for $1.99 or Less

(Flashback, Journal J, p. 188)

First, the "less" part. Dutch and I decided we were going to have some skis. We had no money but somehow, someway, we felt such could be ours. So, we picked out a straight-grained Oregon cedar fence post, sized it up and then split it into four thin lengths about six feet long. Each of these we smoothed as best we knew how and then we nailed a piece of old harness strap to the center. These were to place our overshoes into as we motivated each ski.

Dutch put his into position and then placed each foot into the appropriate loop. He labored forward a short distance and came to a stop.

"Dark, I can't keep the fronts from going under the snow," he explained.

I, as yet, had not tried mine, but after doing so I replied, "We gotta turn up the ends — but how?" Then necessity became the mother of invention: I said, "Dutch, you know that old fender off Pat's bike?"

"Yea, what about it?"

"Let's cut some pieces from it and nail them on the front of these skis," I offered.

"Ya know, that might work."

Soon we became the proud owners of the first skis we had ever owned. Needless to say, these did not function well but they were ours.

Our parents must have got the message because on a succeeding Christmas we each received a pair of skis valued at $1.99 a pair!!

These were simple hickory units with a single strap for each foot. But wax added a lot to their efficiency. We became proficient in cross country travel and also used the skis for minor stunt work.

The farmyard straw stack became our "mountain" to conquer. We would climb to the summit of the huge mountain-like pile of grain straw. On top, we would place our skis in proper position, place our booted shoes in the leather straps and then attempt to descend to the level area below. The various humps of snow that covered bulges in the stack became challenges for us. These we usually conquered. One could, after the snow had crusted, glide from the top, down the side, and then coast for perhaps two to three hundred feet. It was great fun.

Then, as we became more proficient, we constructed jumps. These were built of snow and were made to a height of three to six feet. One held to a rope as he was pulled by a saddle horse. The trick was to ride up each successive sloping jump (usually three jumps) and sail from the abrupt termination at the summit of each. It took real training to alight on both skis without falling.

This diagram shows how the jumps were arranged.



Drawing by Versal LaVel Davis

I have also ridden skis as I was pulled behind a moving car. This was tricky because of the uncertain roadside terrain. I well recall one time when Thelma was pulling me at high speed. I was doing fine until I inadvertently let one ski go under a loop of barbed wire which was semi-hidden in the snow. I sailed through the air for about thirty feet then plummeted head first into deep snow. No, I wasn't physically hurt but my dignity suffered some as Thelma laughed about the episode.

I have used this method of travel in other ways also. In winter, I used to do some trapping of muskrats, skunks, weasels, and rabbits. The use of skis became necessary then.

During the worst days of winter, the school wagon (sleigh) would often fail to appear. Skis would then become our transport system.

I think of the great fun we, as kids, had. This was wholesome and financially cheap. Today, by contrast, hundreds of dollars are needed to pay for all the sophisticated equipment that is used. But, Dutch and I had just as much fun as we used our $1.99 specials.

I'm Sorry, Sir

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 50)

I'll get a bottle of peaches from the cellar. I think I can do it without Vera knowing about it," Orville Loveland said.

"Yea, and I'll catch one of mom's chickens and wring its neck," Dutch offered.

"We will need some spuds but I don't think we have any here," I offered. Then, thinking, I added, "I'll tell you what. I'll get some out of Old Man Frokes' spud

patch. It's real close to the swimmin' hole."

"Say, that will be OK. Let's get goin," Orville asserted.

So we had made our plans for a private cookout and swim. This was to take place on the banks of the St. Anthony Canal at our favorite swimmin' hole called the "Levee."

Bert and Vera had gone somewhere as had Henry and Merlie so getting the fruit and chicken was quite easy. I procured an old fry pan and a tin cup or two. Together we walked to the semi-private area of the levee area. There we built a fire, dressed the chicken and then, before eating, we all went swimming -- in the nude, of course.

Then I said, "Orville, let's sneak up to Ole Man Frokes' spud patch."

"OK, I'll help you," he consented.



Versal, age 12, 1927

So, while Dutch finished dressing, Orville and I walked north to the potato patch. We crawled through the boundary fence then proceeded to the near center of the patch.

Here we pulled two or three vines, salvaged the tubers, then we moved foreward to some better vines. We hadn't bothered to be quiet or to remain hidden in the rows.

We were laughing when we heard a "Well, boys, how are you doing?"

Surprised, we turned around to see the owner looking down on us.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Froke," I tried to say respectfully.

"Need some spuds it looks like," he said with finality.

"Yeh, just a few," Orville added.

"Well, I guess you had better get out of here and go home. I'll expect you both to come to my house and bring your dads first thing tomorrow. I'll be waiting!"

Sheepishly, we went back potatoless to Dutch. The party was over. That evening we all had to report separately to our folks.

"Well, son, I guess you and I have an appointment with Ed Froke in the morning."

That night I wondered and regretted. But morning came relentlessly and soon Dad and I had driven to the Froke place. I tagged along behind Dad as we neared the door. Mr Froke met us just outside and said to dad, "Good morning, Gould. I see you have a partner today."

"Yes, Ed, I think the boy has something to say to you."

Old Man Froke said nothing but looked steadily at me.

"Well son, how about it?" Dad directed.
I opened my mouth but no words came. I swallowed hard.

"Well, he is waiting," Dad said with finality.

"I'm — I'm — I'm sorry sir!" I finally said.

Mr. Froke looked at Dad, and, though I didn't see it, I'm sure there were coy smiles being traded back and forth.

It Happened in Prohibition Times

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 146)

My brother-in-law, Henry Olsen, used to boil wheat and barley contained in a fifty-gallon steel barrel. This made the grain more palatable for feed for his herd of pigs.

Once, after having fed the animals, a small amount of the feed was left inside the barrel. This stood for several days and was now fermenting.

Dutch and I were playing around this odious barrel when we noticed some chickens near at hand. We desired to feed them so we simply supplied a few with the excess grain from the barrel. We were not aware at the time that the grain was alcoholic.

However, soon the fed chickens were beginning to act strangely. They emitted unusual cackling noises. They also staggered sideways, often falling upon an outstretched wing.

Then we realized what had taken place. The grain was highly saturated with alcohol and the chickens were becoming very drunk.

Did we stop feeding them? Oh, yes, that is, after the available grain was all gone. I suppose my sister, Merlie, wondered what in the world was temporarily wrong with her fine laying hens.



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson

Peaceful Sleep

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 114)

Look at mine. It acts like it's dead. I'll bet your's won't stay there as long as mine," I confidently made this statement as Dutch prepared another laying hen.

"OK, Dark, you're on," Dutch replied.

"Hey, let's move around behind this wall a bit. I'm afraid somebody will see us," I said as I picked my chicken up.

This was the result of our having heard that if you performed the magic just right you could actually put a chicken to sleep. This was done without any physical harm.

So Dutch and I had captured two white leghorn hens by tempting them to come close to us as we offered them a handful of wheat. After the capture, the fun began, for us that is.

The trick was to place the bird's head under one of its wings, then place both hands around the chicken's body and rotate the chicken in an arc or circle for a minute or so. This seemed to produce a strange paralysis in the chicken, which lasted for several minutes. After the twirling motion you simply placed the bird on the ground with its head still under its wing.

When the chicken moved somewhat, as if regaining consciousness, we would immediately capture it again and repeat the process.

The contest between Dutch and me went on until we grew tired of the repetition.

What Was a Flipper?

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 101)

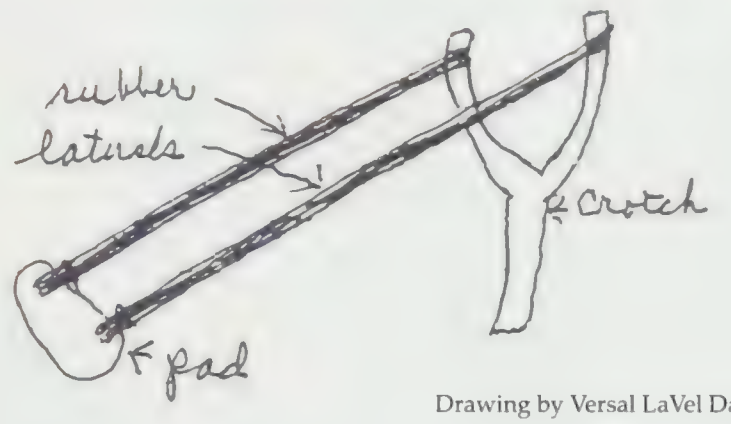
Since I was a boy about 15 years of age, I have not seen, what we, at that time, commonly called a flipper. I was seldom without this weapon.

I will try to explain how this back pocket treasure was made:

It consisted of a flipper crotch, two rubber laterals, and a leather pad. The diagram at the right shows the general shape.

The crotch was selected from the branches of a suitable willow tree. It was carefully cut, shaped and trimmed. This was formed to fit the hand. The rubber bands were cut from an old inner-tube. These bands were about 18 inches long and one-half inch wide. The natural rubber, used in inner tubes at that time, was a perfect material for this purpose. The pad was cut from a piece of soft leather, usually the tongue from a discarded shoe. It was cut somewhat egg-shaped. Two slits were cut to receive the rubber laterals. All these parts were held together by firmly tying each end of the rubber bands to the crotch and pad.

To operate, one held the lower, handle part of the crotch in one hand, while holding a marble-sized rock in the pad with the thumb and finger of the other hand. The projectile was pulled back by the left hand (if one was right-handed), while the right hand extended full-length forward. After proper aim, the pad and rock were released. This caused the rubber bands to rapidly retract and, in so doing, the rock was thrown at high speed toward the intended target.



Drawing by Versal LaVel Davis

I used to carry a flipper everywhere I went. Also, my pockets bulged with the weight of several choice rocks. I certainly do not mean to boast, but my ability with one of these homemade weapons was uncanny. I remember when Warren, my oldest brother, remarked saying, "Dark can shoot that flipper more accurately than I can when I use a gun." This was a compliment to me because he was a good rifle marksman.

Dutch and I used to watch for and keep the best rubber tubes we could find. Old shoes were stripped of their soft leather tongues. Suitable crotches were cut from the nearby willow thicket. The best rocks were selected and, in fact, marbles were sometimes used.

I've shot at and killed many, many ground squirrels or chislers. Sparrows, magpies or robins became [my] prey. I've even killed weasels, which had been destroying young chickens. Then, also, the flipper became a very good piece of equipment to hurry the cows along as I drove them home to the milking parlor.

I enjoyed the use of the flipper until one special time when I spied a mother robin upon a nest. She was sitting thus to hatch the eggs beneath her. I carefully chose and inserted a choice rock in the pad of my flipper. I drew back, aimed carefully and then released the rock. My aim was so perfect that the projectile entered the body of the bird killing it instantly without even knocking it from the nest. I observed and then something within me made me feel terrible.

My use of the flipper from that time was directed only for target practice or to control actual pests. This feeling carried on into my life as time went by. I also used great care as I became proficient with a rifle.

My Private Chisler Herd

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 145)

["Chisler" is a term Dad used for large ground squirrels.]

The chisler population was such that Dutch and I did not have to argue about to whom they belonged. There were hundreds of them near the ranch home; therefore, plenty to go around.

We had entertained ourselves a great deal by trapping the little creatures. Also, we had shot many with our flippers.

But, one day we decided to catch them alive and pretend that we were chisler ranchers. Now this involved a little doing. The animal must be caught without injuring it, then it must be marked so, if needed, it could be identified.

Most of these rodents dug holes, which often were well-defined in level spots of ground. So we devised a method of catching them. We would watch an animal retreat into one of these holes then we would place a loop, a slip-type, around the hole. A twenty to twenty-five foot length of extra heavy cord was extended out from the lariat type of loop. The trick was to catch the chisler by snaring it as it cautiously came to the surface to look around. It would usually come up with just the eyes at ground level, then if one were quiet, it would rise up until the front feet were above the opening of the hole. A quick pull on the cord would usually ensnare the chisler. It became necessary to keep the string tight to avoid any escape.

"Hey, I got one," Dutch jubilantly said.

"Hang on and I'll help you take care of him," I offered.

While Dutch pulled the squirming little rodent toward him, I prepared another loop of string. While the chisler was dangling, I managed to place a slipknot over a hind leg. Then, by holding firmly to both loops and pulling in opposite directions, we could control the prize.

A small fire had previously been built in which we had placed our special wire branding irons. Dutch's was a "W" representing his given name, Warren. Mine was a simple "V" representing my given name, [Versal].

"I'll hold the little cuss while you brand him," I offered.

"Well, don't let him get loose or I get to keep the first one that you catch," Dutch countered.

So Dutch ran to the fire, obtained his private sign of ownership [his branding iron] and then returned to the captured rodent. A quick application of the hot marker to the distended side of the chisler was sufficient to definitely establish ownership. The violently squirming animal was then allowed to go free. This process was repeated several times as each of us acquired our private herd of chislers.



Versal, age 14, 1929

From the Lowly Cattail

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 103)

Oh, boy, here's a dandy," I remarked as I quickly cut the stem of a cattail.

"I'll bet yours isn't as good as mine," Dutch replied in utter confidence.

"Prove it," I emphatically enjoined.

This banter created a close comparison of his and my newly-cut cattail stocks. These were being obtained to augment

our supply of arrows. We had previously made some bows by utilizing suitable stocks or limbs of dry black willow trees. I must admit that the bows were quite crude but they did resemble a utility bow. These were bent and strung with strong cotton cord.

The arrows — well these were somewhat fragile affairs but were very straight and light. The shafts were selected from the best we could find. The brown cattail top was removed by simply shredding the cotton-like material from the stem. A length of about three feet was determined and the piece cut to that. The top of the stem was hard, where the cotton fuzz had been, and was notched to receive the string of the bow. The opposite end — the arrowhead part — was cut square and a small nail was driven into the exposed end. This gave the arrow forward balance and great speed.

Actually, we lost many of these because we shot them so far and fast that they were lost to sight and couldn't be found.

It was great fun to shoot directly overhead and then wait for the kerplunk of the arrow as it fell somewhere near.

The contest was to see who could cause the arrow to alight the nearest to the shooter.

Wild West Style

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 184)

After my 'flipper' (sling shot) days I was allowed to shoot a .22 caliber rifle. The first one I ever used was a simple, single-shot type. It was a Stevens model that operated with a cantilever breach, which admitted one cartridge only. It had simple, fixed sights which were easily bent or distorted. One had to get used to the undependability of the sighting system.

But, nevertheless, I thrilled to carry this weapon and imagine I was the first to venture into the "wilds" with it. This gun actually belonged to Wayne. He kept it for many years.

After Warren went east to Rochester, New York, he sent a new, well-made rifle. It was a bolt action model, which had a clip magazine holding five cartridges. Adjustable sites complimented the unit. It was made by Savage Arms Corp. and was designated as a Model 23A Super Sporter.

I recall when Dutch and I used to go rabbit hunting during winter months. It was easy to find and see the many "long ears" as they appeared in the white background. Warren (Dutch) used a slide-action .22 rifle and, of course, I sported the new Savage bolt action. We pretended to be wild west scouts as we hunted. The "booty" was carried home where it became fresh meat for the chickens.

As time went by we used these guns so much that we became very proficient with them. Enough so, that often we could fire at a moving rabbit without aiming. Our success was hard to believe. This type of shooting was done by simply and quickly raising the gun to shooting position, keeping both eyes on the target and then instinctively firing.

During the summer months we kept in shape by shooting ground squirrels, which we commonly called chislers. It was not unusual to kill four to five of these with one shot as they lined up near a burrow. I have often killed more than fifty of these small rodents using a full box of cartridges with fifty cartridges per box. The multiple success shots more than offset the occasional misses.

Cartridges were bought in the local stores, where I have often paid only thirty-five cents for two 50-count boxes of .22 caliber shorts.

Incidentally, the gun spoken of (Savage) is still in use and is owned by Wayne's only son, Wayne C., of Chester, Idaho. This, at this time, is 1981.



Dutch, age 16, 1929

What Kids Won't Do!

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 143)

I had been lucky — I had killed a morning dove by using my rubber flipper. Dutch had come along about the same time so we just couldn't let that fresh meat go to waste.

"I'll build a little fire over here," Dutch offered.

"Good, I'll sneak some radishes out of the garden," I replied as I ran toward the garden plot.

Our 'little fire' was being built in a combination calf-and-horse pasture. Dutch soon had it burning brightly and I helped as I skinned the dove and prepared it for roasting. The radishes had been washed in the nearby ditch and now all was ready for the feast. . . except, after a bite or two we knew we needed some salt.

"I don't think Grandma would let us have any salt. Anyway, she would sure be mad if she knew we had this fire," Dutch remarked.

I thought a moment then I noticed something over by the ditch bank.

"I know what we'll do. You just watch," I said as I walked over to a large fifty-pound block of salt that was used by the calves and horses.

"Oh, boy, that oughta work," Dutch eagerly replied, as he assisted me in carrying the salt block to the fire area.

"Hey, this is the way to do it," I said. "Just rub your radish and the meat in this little pocket. It's wet there too."

Thereupon, we alternately roasted a piece of meat then rubbed it in the smooth hollowed-out pocket in the block of salt. Occasionally a radish was also placed therein.

The open pocket in the salt had just recently been made by the horses and calves as they flicked their tongues repeatedly into the ever-enlarging pocket. Of course, the animal saliva aided our cause.

Lassoing a Pig!

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 139)

This is the way Tom Mix does it," I remarked as I threw a [rope] loop over the bolster stake of the wagon. My verbal comparison was made to the cowboy abilities of my favorite movie idol.
Dutch was trying to twirl his loop but with only moderate success.

"You will have to do better than that," I said as I watched his failing attempts.

"I'll bet I can catch that old sow over there," he countered.

"Betcha can't," I challenged.

Dutch coiled the rope, then as the large brood sow drew near, he cast the loop. It sailed beautifully through the air, hovered over the pigs head then settled down in a perfect arc. The sow bolted forward just as the noose drew tight around her midsection. With a loud squeal she tried to run with the rope but I quickly assisted Dutch in stopping the frightened animal.

Then what should we do? We didn't dare approach the sow, so in desperation we tied the rope's free end to the spoke of the convenient wagon wheel.
Fear began to grip us as we realized we had created a problem. So we ran!!

"Hey, Dark, let's hide in the straw stack."

"Yea, let's get busy," I added.

We quickly dug a suitable hole in the new straw stack then, after crawling in, we drew some straw in over us. Fearfully, we remained here for several hours. We grew thirsty and hungry but still we were afraid to face justice.

Then somewhere close we heard, "Hey you damned kids, where are you?"

This caused us to dig a little deeper. Then the semi-darkness turned into inky blackness. Our fear was still with us but we were also afraid of the darkness. Besides, we were getting more hungry and thirsty.

"Maybe if we just walk in the house like we'd been somewhere else nobody would know," Dutch said.

"You go first," I implored.

"Nope, we better go together," he affirmed.

So, timidly we emerged from our hiding place. We slowly walked to the house, quietly entered and sheepishly looked around.

"Where have you boys been?" Mother impatiently

asked. "We've been looking all over for you."

"Oh, just outside playing," I whispered.

"Well, where?"

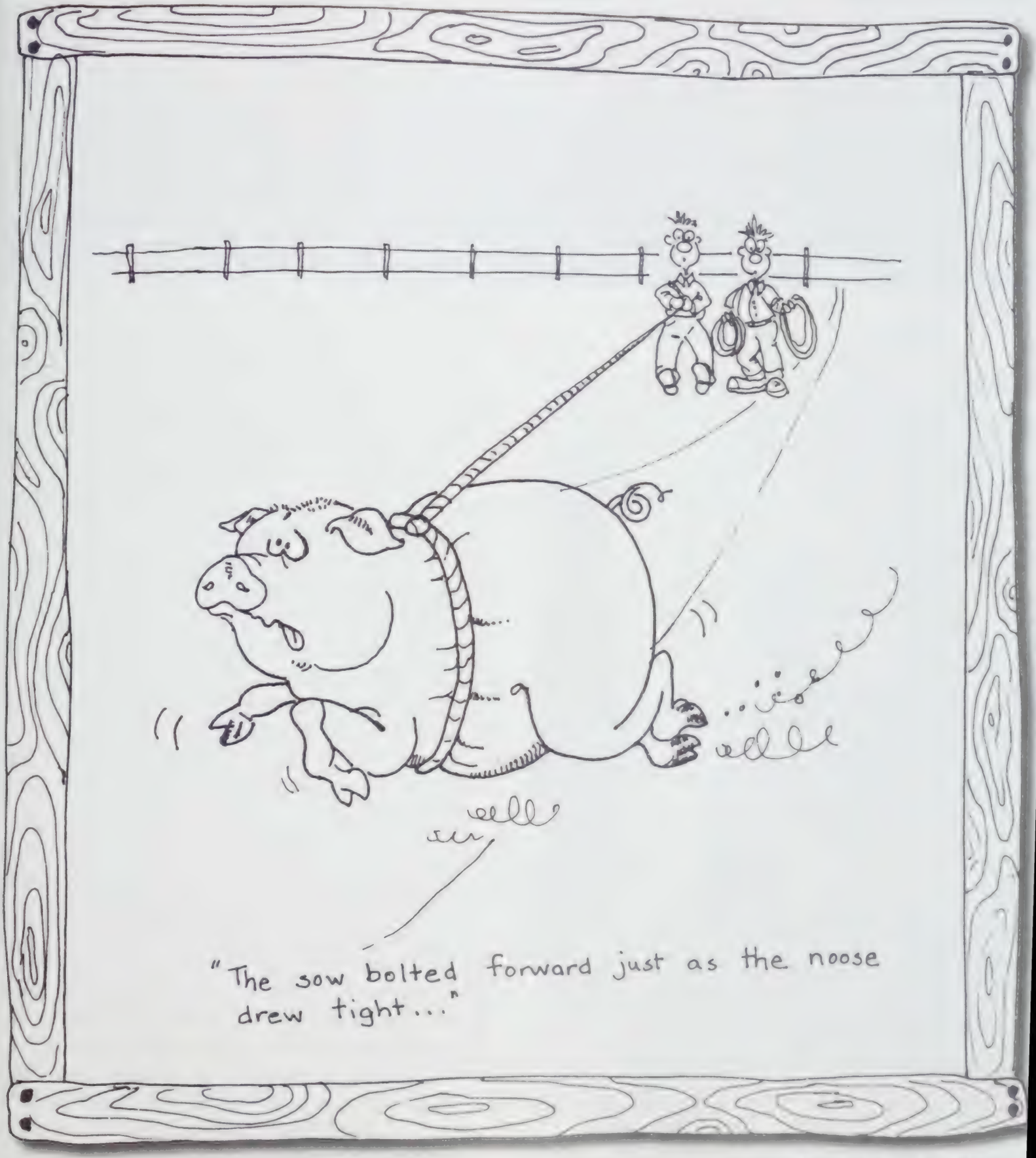
"Oh, just outside. Back in the yard," I answered.

"Well, we called and called," she said.

"You've been hiding somewhere. Look at you...all covered with grain straw. Is that where you've been?"

This we could not deny. We were reprimanded for not coming in earlier but we, thankfully, were not whipped.

The old sow!! Oh, yes, she evidently freed herself from the confining rope. We really had suffered our anguish in vain.



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson



Suckers Anyone?

(Flashback, Journal I, p. 175)

Hey, Dark, look at this one," Dutch remarked as he held a big, squirming sucker on the tines of the pitchfork in his hands.

"Wow! I hope I can find me one like that," I enviously replied.

This action was the result of the water having been turned off at the head of the Last Chance Canal. This was a fair-sized irrigation lateral, which supplied many of the nearby farms with irrigation water. Usually, once each summer, the canal was drained to permit cleaning and repairs.

We, as adventuresome kids, welcomed the occasion. It promised great fun as we were permitted to wade the now-quiet pools as we tried to spear the suckers, which were always trapped therein.

These fish were ugly and repulsive to look at and were not considered fit for table use. I'll never know why there were so many of them but we were delighted to wade among them. As the pool became muddy, by the action of the fish, and also our wading barefoot among them, it was not uncommon to feel these large suckers as they swam by our legs.

We, of course, knew the deeper and best holes, which always trapped several prizes. The trick was to catch them within the limited area of their temporary confinement. It was great fun to try grabbing one by using just our hands. But, a common pitchfork proved best. One could outright spear them or simply [use the pitchfork to] scoop them up and out upon the bank.

We did not use these trash fish for anything except, perhaps, as chicken feed. Most were left to decompose on the near bank. Many of these fish would weigh as much as 6 or 7 pounds each. To us, as boys, they seemed huge. We always regretted the water being turned back into the canal. But, hopefully, next year would bring conquest again.

This presence of fish in the canal was not noted after the Island Park Reservoir was filled and put to use. For some reason the canal no longer contained these fish. Also, I remember catching crayfish in the river, but almost immediately after the use of the reservoir, these disappeared also. River clams and bullheads suffered the same demise.

I lament somewhat over this fact because it provided, before the reservoir, many hours of real fun for at least two fun-loving boys.

All For Supper

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 168)

It was another of our overnight campouts. Dutch and I had harnessed 'Ol Prince and Ginger early that morning. We had previously loaded some hay upon the back end of the open wagon box. Our camping gear was composed of two or three blankets, some cooking and eating gear, and most importantly, our telescopic, $1.99 fishing poles.



"Hey, let's get out of here," I said as I took my seat beside Dutch. We were resting upon a board placed crosswise of the narrow wagon box.

"Get up, Prince. You too, Ginger," Dutch addressed the willing horses as they responded to the light shake of the lines.

Soon we were happily riding toward the mountains ahead and north of us. Sand Creek was at the base of these and we knew there were "red specks," by the hundreds in the clear water.

By noon we had driven and ridden over the last hill and were traversing the gradual grade to the creek bottom below. After crossing a small pole bridge which spanned the small stream, we stopped, quickly unhitched the horses, pulled the harness from them, led them to water then tied each to a rear wheel of the wagon.

"Here, Dark, take this can of worms and don't you dare lose any," Dutch instructed me.

"Don't worry, and here is your fish sack," I replied as I gave him a plain gunnysack, which had been cut to fit [a person's body and was attached] with a loop over one's head and shoulder.

"Betcha I catch the first 'speck'," Dutch challenged as we adjusted and threaded our cheap fishing rods.

"You're on," I quickly answered.

Soon our rods were threaded, leaders attached, and hooks tied on. Dutch threaded a writhing angleworm on his hook then he walked to the bridge, over which we had just come, and dropped the baited hook in the water on the upstream side. The current carried it beneath the timbers. Immediately the rod tip quivered and Dutch pulled a small-but-beautiful, red-spotted, eastern brook trout from the clear water.

"Ha-ha! That didn't take long and you haven't even got your line wet yet," Dutch taunted me.

Somewhat chagrined I soon selected a promising spot and quickly was rewarded with a sparkling beauty.

"Mine is biggest anyway," I proclaimed, as I held the flopping fish in my hands.

We continued fishing as the afternoon sped by. My sack was becoming noticeably heavier and so I stopped to take count. I actually had over three dozen of these very small but wonderful fish. I caught two or three more as I fished the deep holes under the banks.

"Hey, Dutch, I've got enough for supper. Let's go eat," I announced, supposing he had only a few.

"Yea, I'm hungry," he simply replied.

We retraced our way back to our camp area, where we spread our prizes on the bank to clean them prior to frying them in a fry pan held over an open fire.

"Boy, they sure did bite, didn't they!" Dutch said more as a statement of fact than as a question.

"Let's count them and see how many we got," I suggested.

As we counted 1—2—3—4—25—40—65—80—85—88—90—91—92! NINETY-TWO!

Well, we were two elated hungry boys and, believe it or not, but we ate EVERY ONE of those delicious morsels for supper!

Versal (left) and Dutch (right) with Dutch's older half-brother Albert Olsen and their catch from Island Park Reservoir, 1946.





Versal, about 15, ca. 1930

Chapter Three

As a Teen & Young Adult

VLD

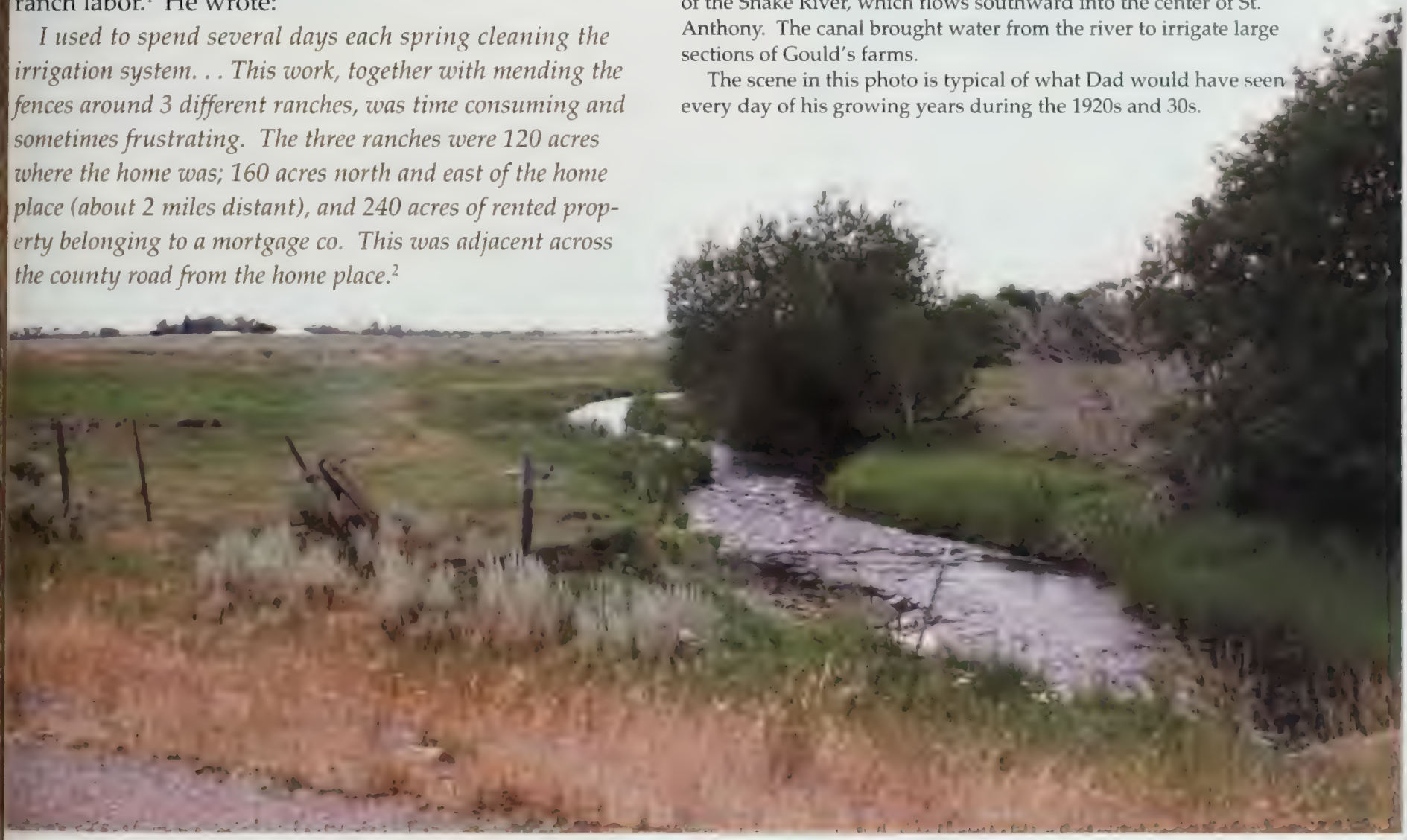
During his early teens Dad was often left to do mundane chores such as cleaning the canals, repairing fences, and herding cows, while his father and older brothers tackled more formidable ranch labor.[1] He wrote:

I used to spend several days each spring cleaning the irrigation system. . . This work, together with mending the fences around 3 different ranches, was time consuming and sometimes frustrating. The three ranches were 120 acres where the home was; 160 acres north and east of the home place (about 2 miles distant), and 240 acres of rented property belonging to a mortgage co. This was adjacent across the county road from the home place.[2]

A 2008 view of the Last Chance Canal and surrounding acreage across the road (and slightly south) of the Davis family ranch home.

The visible land is a portion of a 240-acre segment Gould rented and farmed in conjunction with two large pieces of his own property. The trees in the far distance line the Henry's Fork of the Snake River, which flows southward into the center of St. Anthony. The canal brought water from the river to irrigate large sections of Gould's farms.

The scene in this photo is typical of what Dad would have seen every day of his growing years during the 1920s and 30s.



My Aaronic Priesthood Years and Before

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 31)

I well remember the day I was baptized. It took place in the open, St. Anthony-located, Egin Canal on May 31, 1924. The day was cold as I joined a few others on the banks of this large irrigation stream which flows from the Snake River.

I was clad in ordinary bib overalls, not in the formalized white attire commonly used today. The actual baptizing was done by a Brother Jenkins. The water was cold and I recall shivering a great deal after the ceremony. Needless-to-say, some warm dry clothes were appreciated as they were furnished at the conclusion of this simple, but important ordinance.

After my baptism I became very active in the [Primary] Trail Builder's program, which was taught very ably by my sister, Merlie. I remain indebted to her for the many, many times she took me to weekly meetings.

When twelve years of age, I was given the Aaronic Priesthood. I officiated as usual as a deacon. However, I have found no record of my ever being a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. Also, I remember nothing about this ever having been the case. I do remember, however, serving as a priest.

These years were special as I learned more and more about church service as I did the many tasks required of me. This was all done while I was a member of the St. Anthony 1st Ward, which met regularly in the upstairs section of the Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle.

Our conveyance during these years consisted of horse drawn buggy or bob-sleigh. Occasionally an old car was used. Walking the four miles was common also.

Incidentally, Thelma attended the St. Anthony 2nd Ward, which met in the basement section of the same tabernacle. I remember very little about her at this time. No doubt my mind was on things, which seemed more important at that time.

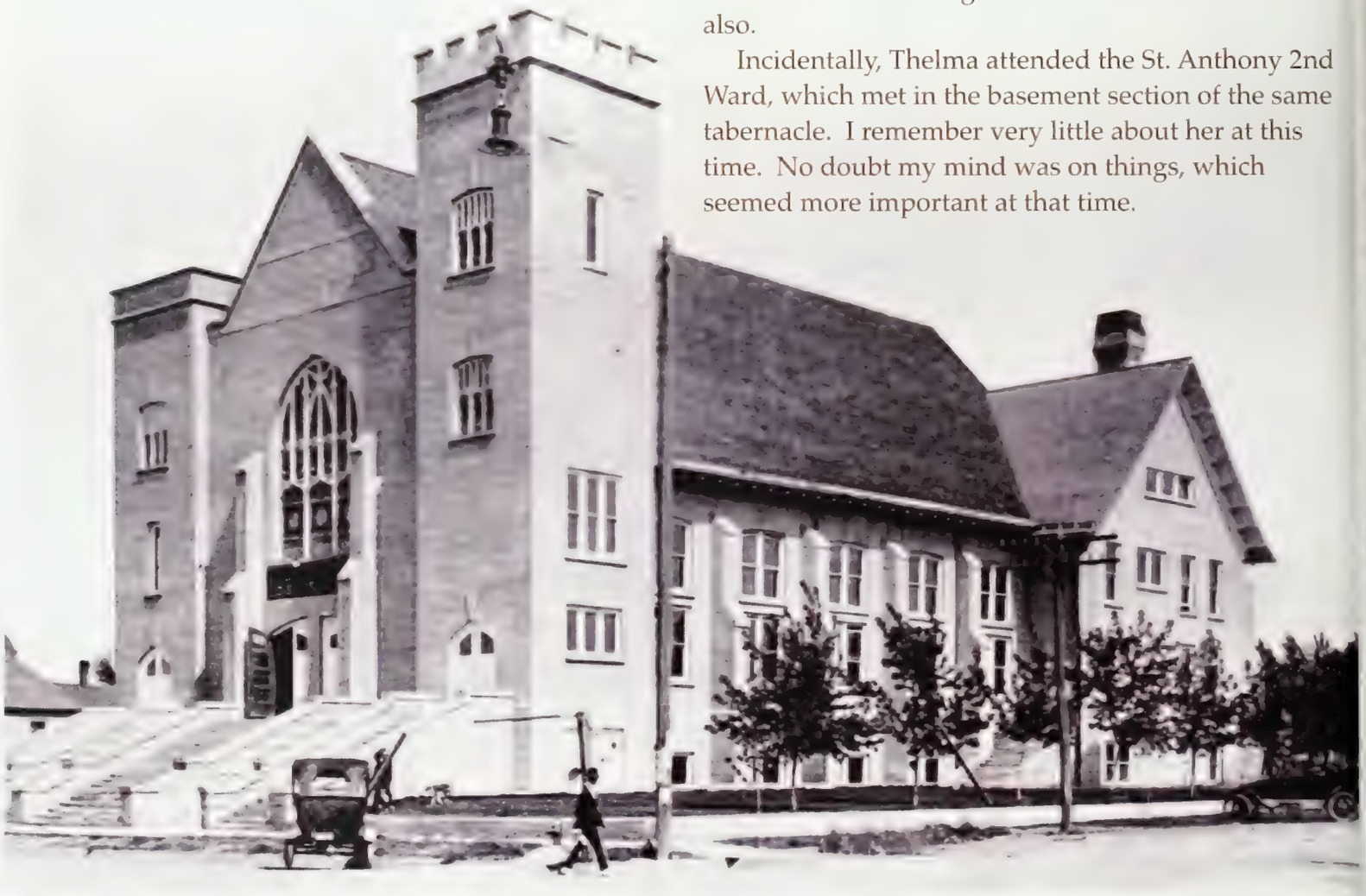


Photo courtesy Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society

The Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle, ca. 1915. The Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle, located on the corner of Bridge Street and East Third South in St. Anthony, was built in 1911. With a seating capacity of 1,000, it was well known for its stained glass windows and dark wood. The tabernacle was used for stake conferences, regular church meetings, weddings, funerals, and other gatherings. The St. Anthony 1st Ward, comprising those who lived north of the Henry's Fork of the Snake River (including Gould and Alice Davis and their children), met in the upper portion of the tabernacle in the big auditorium and balcony area. The St. Anthony 2nd Ward, with those who lived south of the river (including Jick and Ruby Hall and their children), occupied the basement using the recreation hall and stage area. The tabernacle was torn down in 1966 to make room for a new freeway through St. Anthony.[3]

I Hope the Lord Remembers

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 174)

When Dutch and I were deacons and teachers in the St. Anthony 1st Ward we were assigned, as a couple, to collect fast offerings each month. This took place in the area in which we lived. Because of the distances involved, we would use a team hooked to a buggy or, if in winter, to a bob sleigh.

I remember doing this on many, many occasions as we fulfilled our duty in this respect. I don't recall that it was difficult; in fact, it was fun to ride in the open box of the buggy or bob sleigh.

The responsibility involved catching the horses, harnessing them, hooking them to the conveyance, going on the route where we contacted about ten families, returning home and then taking care of the horses as we unharnessed them and fed them.

Compared to the simple mechanics of the collections now it seems almost incredible. But we did what we must do with what we had to do it with.

I surely pray that the Lord will be especially kind to people who have had to put out as we felt we did. I do hope He remembers the great effort involved.

Dad and Me

(Flashback)

As I sat on the cushion of alfalfa hay, which was supported by log chains hanging between poles lashed to the wagon bolsters, I wondered if Dad really realized what we were about to do.

I was only about 13 or 14 at the time and, though I was somewhat experienced in doing what was contemplated, I was yet very apprehensive. You see, we were ready to proceed toward the mountains north of us about 25 miles distant. The weather was cold and threatening with frosty snow flakes starting to fall. I had made excursions similar to this before but not preceding an imminent winter storm.

But, though somewhat worried about the outcome, I resigned my fate to Dad's apparent confidence and after a "goodbye" to Mom, we started on our way. Dad proudly sat on his cushion of hay and tapped Dan with the loose line. Immediately the horse moved forward and Bally responded at the same time. My team, old Rock and Nig, followed closely behind and soon we were trotting noisily along the county road.

The hay was lashed so it would not shake off and soon I squirmed a pocket into it where I retreated to keep out of the wind, cold, and falling snow.

We usually planned on 2 to 3 days for a trip such as this. Traveling consumed most of the time and cutting, felling, and trimming the dry logs required about one full day to load two wagons. These logs were usually used for winter firewood but occasionally we would haul out fence posts, fencing poles, and perhaps a saw log or two for lumber.

On this trip, however, we were after more dry timber to supplement our winter wood supply. Usually 10 to 15 cords of fuel were required to last a year. One wagonload would amount to about one-and-a-half to two cords of wood.

After about 3 hours travel time we had traversed over several miles of dry farming area after which we reached the foothills leading to the mountain pass over which we must go. These foothills were especially dear to me because of the many small trout streams which emanated from them. I, of course, knew these very well after having camped near them on several occasions.

The snow and cold had increased as we proceeded until now we were making 2-inch deep tracks in the new snow. This snow had a tendency to cling to the steel bands of the wagon wheels until it broke away with a crunch and a bounce as the wheel relentlessly continued rolling onward and upward.

Before we attempted the long ascent of Sodoria Hill, we stopped at a creek called Sand Creek and let the teams drink from the clear, cold stream. Then we hooked them to the wagons again and, after Dad checked to see if all was well, we started up the long, exciting, mountain road. As I proceeded I wondered how I would control the horses and load when we returned, going down hill. But soon we were at the summit and then proceeded down as the road threaded through the dense lodge pole forest. This was pristine forest at that time and elk, deer, bear, and mountain lion were common residents. The occasional tracks in the new snow proved that they were very near us.

In this wonderland of white beauty we rolled on until, after about five miles, we reached what was

commonly known as Elk Wallow. It was a meadow with a small spring where travelers through the area often stopped to rest and camp. However, we continued on beyond this point until we came to a dense, timbered area near a peak called High Point. Here, we elected to stop, rest for the night, and cut our loads the next day.

Our teams were willing to stop and, after removing the harnesses and hanging the lame straps over a convenient limb, we tied each horse to a wagon wheel. We removed the hay from the wagon gears and portioned some out to each animal. Some of the hay became a welcome mattress over which Dad and I spread our heavy quilts and blankets. As soon as this was done we immediately put up a makeshift tent composed of a few light poles and the binder canvasses from the grain binder at home. These were laid shingle fashion over the supporting poles and made a crude but effective cover from the failing snow.

Dad soon had a warming fire blazing and had placed a postum pot in the embers. He enjoyed this very much and while doing so, told me of experiences he had on similar trips. I didn't listen too intently, however, because I was tired and soon started nodding my head. He noticed this, of course, and soon prepared a choice section of the bed for me to retreat into.

I often listened for sounds of wildlife and usually I was rewarded by perhaps a coyote calling to its mate or maybe a mountain lion screaming in dismay. I don't recall being very nervous about this; in fact, I felt defeated somewhat if I did not hear or see any of the natural inhabitants of the area.

The snow abated during the night and early in the morning Dad wakened me to a cold clear day. It was quite an effort to face the bitter cold and wet spots of the bedding, but after considerable teeth chattering, I managed to don my clothes, wet socks, shoes and overshoes. We watered the horses from a fifty-gallon barrel, which Dad had carried on his wagon. More hay was given to [the teams], then Dad and I ate fried eggs and bacon. Bread was toasted near the fire and after consuming all this, we were ready for a day's work.

The trees we wanted were found and selected. The two-man cross-cut was brought forth and soon Dad and I had felled several nice, dry pines. These we '"bucked" up into 16-foot lengths for proper fit on the empty wagon bolsters.

Old Nig was harnessed and then it became my job to "snake'" or drag each length to a convenient opening in the timber where the pieces could be loaded onto the wagons. Dad would remain where the trees were felled and would "limb" each piece.

By noon we had acquired enough for loading and after a sandwich or two [washed down] with more warm postum, we commenced loading. The heavier logs were rolled up [onto the wagon bolsters] over a couple of heavy poles. The lighter pieces were lifted by brute strength.

By dusk we were through and soon had the chains bound tightly around each load. These chains were held taut by a [thin branch from a] green jack-pine, which was threaded through the chain. This limber tree, about six or seven feet in length, was then tightened by hand and lashed by a small piece of rope.

After caring for the horses, we again ate and then snuggled down for the night. We were both very tired and Dad did not spend any time telling stories.

The chill of [the next] morning awoke me only to find that Dad had already rebuilt the fire and had a warm breakfast ready. After eating and cleaning camp we packed our gear and loaded it on the tops of the loads of logs. Dad then made sure the brake pole was securely fastened in the braking system of each wagon. A rope was run from the front bolster back to the pole, through a pulley, then returned to a convenient spot near the teamster. When descending a steep grade it was necessary to pull on this rope, which activated a set of rubbing blocks (made of wood), which in turn created friction against the iron wagon tires.

Dad and I harnessed the teams and hooked them to the respective wagons. Because of the cold the horses' necks were stiff and it took a little coaxing to finally get them to pull the loads. But after finally moving and the horses knowing they were headed home, we got under way.

I felt like a king as I majestically steered old Rock and Nig along the road back home. The forest was serene and though the crunching of the snow under the relentless turning of the large wagon wheels was bouncing me up and down, I was glad to be part of the adventure.

Before noon we reached the part of the Sodoris Hill, which we had to ascend before the long descent on the homeward side. It became necessary to "double up" our teams and pull each wagon to the top separately. I felt quite important as I did my share while Dad directed the operation.

By noontime, we were at the summit and after a

short rest we started down this long steep mountain road. Handling the team and pulling frequently on the brake rope was a full time task and I must admit that I became apprehensive at times on the rough steep grades. In fact. Dad realized this and so an old heavy snag [a dead tree trunk] was chained to the rear of my wagon. This was dragged behind to assist the braking action of the brake blocks. Upon finally reaching the base of the grade, this was then released and we continued our long journey home.

Famed photographer Ansel Adams took this striking photo of the Snake River and the Tetons — majestic mountains visible from the Davis ranch, 1942.



Spring Cleaning of the Canal

(Flashback, Journal I, p. 180)

"Son, you're going to regret doing that some day," Dad said as I waded into the cold water of the Snake River.

"Oh, this not too bad," I replied.

I had driven the team and wagon into the deepening waters of the lava dam. This long, rock structure was placed in the river to divert the river flow into the channel leading to the canal head gates. During preceding months straw, moss, and willows had been washed away creating troublesome leaks in the lava rock arrangement. Because of this, new straw or hay had to be pressed into the more obvious leaks. This required getting thoroughly wet. Of course, it had to be done, but in my eagerness to show my daring, I needlessly chilled at times.

"Just wait a few years and you'll remember what I'm telling you."

With this final remark by Dad, I continued being an adventurous, daring, unthinking young man.

But I continued in, urging Buck and Tess into wagon-wheel deep water. I half-walked, half-swam as I removed the packing material from the wagon box and then placed it in appropriate places in the block-long dam.

After completing my task, I triumphantly returned to the spot where I had entered the water. Here I ably balanced myself as the team of bays pulled the wagon and box from the river.

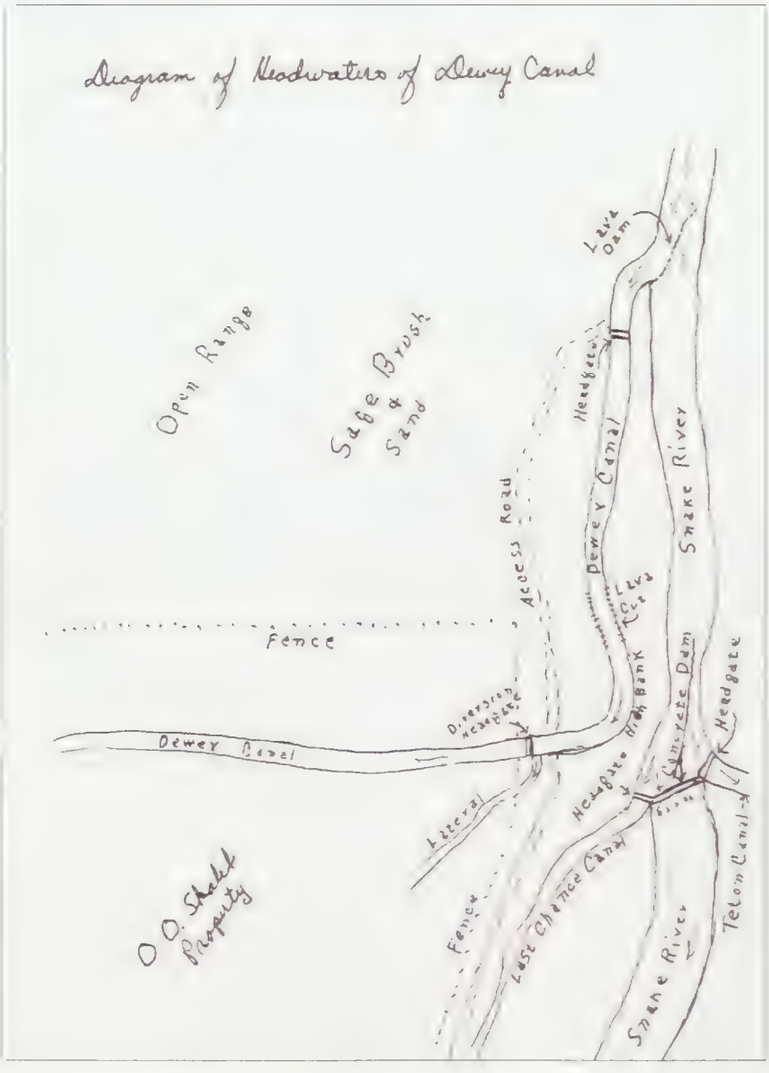
In the eyes of the assisting farmers present, I was a hero!

This was a process, which was repeated each year usually in the spring time. It was laborious but yet it was great to mingle with the neighbors as we got together and cleaned and repaired the irrigation system.

This, sometimes, would require several days during which time we would vie with each other as we drove our best teams in pulling out trees, using a slip scraper, or perhaps removing a large section of lava rock. Hand work was needed also as we chopped away heavy brush or shoveled away dirt and sand.

The communal spirit was strong and I reflect back with pleasure as I remember our united efforts.

Incidentally, Dad was correct — I have suffered from arthritic problems. Perhaps that cold exposure had something to do with it.



Drawing by Versal LaVel Davis

Whose Was It?

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 162)

"Hey, Gould, there is a big bunch of lava rocks in the canal up by the cut," George Singleton informed Dad.

"Well, can the water get through?" Dad asked.

"No, I'm afraid not. We'll have to go up there and move them out," our neighbor replied.

So, emergency repair was deemed necessary before the first water of the season could be routed to the ranches.

A work force was organized and early the next day many of us from the ranches served by the canal went with our tools and horse-drawn equipment to the upper reaches of the canal. This was a cliffside section, bordering the Snake River, and about one-half mile from the headgate, which controlled the flow from the river.

We peered down into the canal and sure enough a

section of cliff rock had fallen into the waterway. So we divided the work responsibility. I was assigned to assist in removing the smaller rocks, which I rolled over the lower bank and let plunge into the river below. I enjoyed doing this as I demonstrated my strength as a growing teenager. The larger rocks were drug away by teams of horses.

"Hey, what is this?" Blaine Singleton asked as he held up a yellowed bone. It looked like a large section of an animal's leg. Blaine cast it aside and commenced removing rock again.

George, Blaine's father, then remarked, "This piece here looks like a human rib."

Then all who were near joined the two Singletons as further digging took place.

I eagerly pushed debris aside as we dug deeper into the pile. More skeleton bones were removed and soon we recognized the broad oval part of a human skull. This we carefully extricated from the dirt and brush. More digging produced most of the other members of the skeletal frame. Also, we recovered an old pack saddle, a metal canteen, and some Indian beads.

The skull section was intact and the jaw section could be readily moved up and down to simulate normal chewing action. The remains were evidently those of a half-grown Indian boy, judging by the size of the component parts. The body, after death, had been lowered into a suitable fissure in the rock strata. A few personal possessions had been added and then the crevice had been filled with soil and sand.

The presence of a leather, pack saddle and a metal canteen indicated that this burial had taken place since the advent of white men in the area.

These remains, with the artifacts, were given to a local historical society, where they were cataloged and preserved.

Who was this young Indian boy? Why did he die? What tribe was he from and just how long had the remains been in the rocks above the canal? All unanswered questions.



Vard Wright shown with a portion of his Indian Arrowhead collection in his St. Anthony home, 11 July 2010. Vard's mother, Bernice, was the daughter of Versal's oldest sister, Merlie (thus making him Versal's great nephew). Having lived in St. Anthony his entire life, Vard had many opportunities to explore the lava fields, sand hills and sagebrush flats in the area. He, too, discovered many Indian artifacts over the years including pottery, household implements, skeletal remains, and thousands of arrowheads. Negotiations are underway for his extensive collection to be donated to a university or museum.[4]

Branding Time

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 185)

Let's have that bally-faced one next, then the black one over in the corner," Dad said as he put another piece of wood upon the branding fire.

I soon had thrown a noose over the neck of the appointed "short" yearling and experienced trouble bringing the struggling calf to the exit gate. I replied, "I need some help with this one."

Dad strode over to the pole corral and gave me some assistance, as we pulled and drove the fighting animal from the corral, through the gate, then to the branding area of the farmyard.

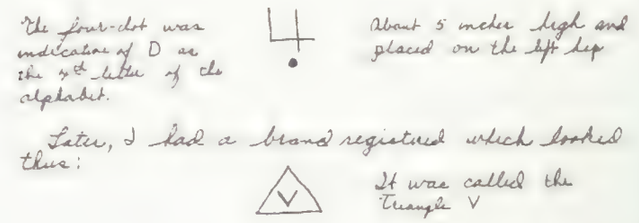
This operation was an annual affair usually done in springtime. The animals needing attention were driven into a pole corral where they were kept until each was roped and removed from the enclosure.

Then, singly, they were roped by the neck and tied to a solid post. The rear legs were then also roped and the animal was stretched and thrown to the ground. The feet or legs were usually tied to a wagon wheel. In this position, as the animal lay mid center between the hitching post and the wagon, it was "operated on." This operation consisted of two or three things. If a heifer, it was branded with a hot iron indicating ownership, then it was dehorned. If the subject was a male, it was also castrated.

Each of these processes was quickly done, though I'm sure each was painful.

The dehorning was done by simply using a meat saw to saw the horn off near the head. This often caused a great deal of bleeding, with tiny spurts of blood shooting out from each side of the head. Castrating caused some bleeding also. Cold pine tar was poured over the wounds to minimize infection from flies.

The branding was done by heating a sculptured iron in a fire. A three-foot-long handle was used to grasp the iron and apply to the spot on the animal where the brand was required to be. Ours was a solid unit, which we used for many years. It was registered in the Idaho State records. It looked like this:



In later years we used dehorners to clip the horns from the animals. This proved to be less painful and caused less bleeding.

Also, I used emasculators to simply sever the testicle cord when castrating. This was done by crimping the cord within the animal. No bleeding was caused. I should mention that we used to vaccinate each animal. This was to prevent a common disease called black-leg.

The animals were watched closely for two or three days and then were driven to a pasture where they remained until round-up time in the fall of the year.

A branded heifer (female cow) with her brand on the right hip. Generally female cattle are branded on the right hip and males on the left, which allows ranchers to distinguish the sex of an animal from a distance. Branding is used not only for owner identification but also as a deterrent to theft. Idaho brands are registered and recorded in regularly updated "Brand Books."[5]





Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson

Dad's Registered Brand

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 107)

Dutch threw another fragment of an old board upon the fire that was blazing in the open barnyard. I had placed Dad's 4 branding iron in the flames preparatory to the task at hand. Tess, a bay mare, and Bally, a grey gelding, had never been branded to positively identify them among neighbors' animals.

The 4 was dad's registered mark and was carried on all the other animals.

This day Dutch and I had decided we would take care of this task. Now these two horses were large, spirited animals and were not to be trusted very far. We had been told that horses could be branded without tying them in a prostrate position on the ground, (the method we used to brand cattle). All one had to do was tie the animal, by its head, close to the manger in the horse barn. We expected to place the hot iron on the left hip of each animal. So plenty of space was provided for this operation.

"Hey, Dark, I think this thing is hot enough," Dutch said as he pulled the three-foot long handle from the fire. The branding iron was a dull red. The 4 was indeed ready.

" OK, I'll take it then," I replied as I grasped the steel shaft and held it majestically in front of me. I walked to the barn door, triumphantly walked in and proceeded to Bally's left side. I took a firm stance and then pressed the red-hot iron against the gelding's rounded hip. Strangely, the animal did not move as the hair and skin burned. Then all h_ll broke loose. He bucked, kicked, reared and snorted. I instinctively moved away to safety. Dutch laughed as I ran from the barn.

"Wow, did you see that?" I hurriedly inquired of Dutch.

"Yea, man!! He almost got you when he kicked."

But we had succeeded and now were veterans. So, Tess received the same treatment and she reacted the same way.

Now Bally and Tess were clearly marked and became the official property of the owner of the 4 brand.

Harvest Time

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 163)

Dutch and I raced from the bundle wagons, to which we had tied our teams for the night, to the large, open, galvanized wash tub. It had just been filled with warm water and placed in an open area of the back yard. Two large towels were draped over the nearby clothesline and a large bar of soap was upon a wood box placed next to the large and effective wash basin.

"Hey, Dark, you're pretty dirty. You'd better wait and wash when the engineer and separator man come." Dutch made this remark as I noticed the grime on my hands and also the sticky sweat, which was dropping from my brow.

I obliged and stood back as several others of the threshing crew bent over the open tub and proceeded to wash the dirt and perspiration from their hands and faces.

This was a common practice. The "crew" was composed of about fifteen members, including six to eight teamsters, two field hands, a bagger, a separator man, an engineer, and a water donkey. The steam engine operator (engineer) was expected to wash last with his associate, the separator man. These two were always the grimiest of all and were, therefore, not to pollute the clean water of the tub until all others had finished.

The towels used for drying were very soiled after the washing and drying ordeal. The water, which at the beginning was sparkling clear, was now a mirky, soapy, oily solution.

This was all a normal procedure during harvest season as farmers in the neighborhood pooled their time, talent, energy, equipment, and considerable finances to help each other in harvesting crops of grain or peas.

The men were not always courteous as they made their way to the supper table, which was furnished by the host farmer whose crop was being gathered in. The men sat upon planks, which rested upon blocks of wood at a suitable height. The long table was usually constructed of about three two-foot by twelve-foot planks covered with white bed sheets or perhaps new oil cloth.

The cooks and servers were usually the immediate neighborhood women or girls. They pooled their efforts much the same as the men did theirs. The meals provided were ample and, in fact, it seemed that the hosting households would compete to satisfy the voracious appetites of the working men.

This occurrence, each harvest season, was anticipated with varying and different degrees of sensitivity. To the host farmer or rancher and his wife and family it was a time of hard work, planning, preparation, and extra expense. To the young fellows (such as I at the time) and the girls it was a time to look forward to as we were able to loose some of the steam within us. It was a welcome challenge to determine who could load

Dutch in his Grandfather Gould Davis' wagon pulled by Buck and Tess, 1936.



the largest number of bundles upon a wagon; who could unload fast enough to make the grain separator groan and moan in protest; or who could unload his entire load bundle by bundle without stopping. If we were assigned to bag the grain as it emanated from the conveyor system, we tried to outdo each other in tying or sewing the filled sacks of grain. After this it was deemed manly if you could carry the full sack up a stairway-type of pile to a height well over your head.

I was always awed by the mechanical operation of the huge steam engine. This awesome power was carried to the separator by a long and wide crossed belt which was about ten inches wide and 150 feet long.

I used to look forward to standing on the fantail, or engineers platform, and feel the steady rhythm of the huge steam piston as it hissingly surged back and forth to turn the massive, steel flywheel to which the drive belt was attached.

"Toot, Toot!" This was a signal from the engineer that the engine supply of water was running low. The water donkey heard this and doubled his efforts in pumping fresh water into the portable supply tank mounted on a sturdy wagon. Sometimes this man was required to go a mile or more to get this necessary supply of water. Haste was often needed to prevent the "toot,toot" from being heard.

"Yea Nig, easy Rock." I addressed my team in this way as they approached the side of the bundle carrier mounted on the front of the cavernous mouth of the grain separator. "Hey Nig, get over there," I impatiently tapped the offending, nervous black gelding. But he was not quite ready to do as I bid. So it became necessary to make a complete circle and approach a second time. This time the team responded and I was soon engaged in unloading, bundle by bundle, into the insatiable mechanical monster by me.

A special "bundle fork" was used and the bundles were placed in a heads-first position, one following the other, on the bundle carrier. A continuous chain belt carried the bundles of ripened grain to large, slashing knives, which cut the twine string binding the grain stems together. From this point the grain, with straw, was carried through various shelling processes, after which, the salvaged kernels were transported to the elevator system, which led to the bagging area.

Upon throwing the last of my load into the carrier, the separator man motioned for a cessation of work and the machine was allowed to disgorge its load before the welcome blast of the steam whistle. This signal could be heard for long distances and was the audible notice to stop for the day, to attend to teams of horses or mules, and then head for the large round wash tub.

After supper the men would go to their respective farms and take care of the myriad chore requirements. Then to bed. Daylight saw them again doing chores before they prepared another long harvest day again, which started officially at 7:00 a.m. at the farm, which was being labored on at that time.

These times were hard physically and required much constant effort, but as I reflect upon them, I yearn for the great togetherness and common desire that almost everyone had. All worked as a team for the common good of everyone concerned.

Nose Bags for Horses

(Flashback)

During the summer flies become a great problem in controlling horses. A small, black fly, commonly called a nosefly, would torment the work animals until the horses would swing their heads wildly to avoid the pests. I've often been struck by a horses head as it tried to avoid the flies.

So it became necessary to provide a solution to the problem. Out of this need came a protection for the sensitive noses of the horses. We would take an old burlap sack, cut the bottom open, and then remove a section large enough to go over the horses nose and extend six or eight inches below the horses chin. This section was tied to the bridle and became a companion part until cold weather when the flies were gone.

Horses soon became aware of the protection and actually would position their heads for installation of the protective sack. The cover was not pretty but it was necessary and useful.

Other pests would also afflict horses. These were the myriad mosquitoes, the common horse fly, and the large, black ox-fly.

A horse would tolerate most of these except the ox-fly. This pest would settle on a horse's back near the loin parts. Its bite or sting was evidently very painful and immediate removal of the insect was necessary. Many accidents have been caused by such insect attacks when horses would bolt and run to try and shake the predators loose.

Breaking Draft Horses

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 151)

The young bay mare was skittish as I slowly and, piece by piece, placed the various pieces of harness on her. This horse was a very sensitive, high-spirited animal and was not a "pet." Great care was necessary as she was being prepared for the "breaking-in" process. She was tied closely to the manger pole in the barn. As I snapped or buckled each part of the leather harness I had to be vigilant and elude a possible hoof or shake of the head.

Dutch was helping as he harnessed 'Old Babe'. She was another bay mare and was also the mother to Tess, the new recruit.

"OK, Dark, I've got Ole Babe here ready to go," he remarked.

"Well, I'm going to need some help with Tess. She is pretty riled up," I replied.

"I'll lead this one outside and tie her to the box of the bobsleigh," Dutch offered.

"You do that, then come back in here and give me a lift," I instructed.

I had placed every part of the harness on the nervous horse except the bridle. This was a critical part requiring insertion of the steel bit in the horse's mouth and then pulling upward to allow the leather straps to be placed behind the sensitive ears.

Dutch pulled downward on the tie rope which was attached to the head halter. The mare responded by lowering her head. I carefully and slowly placed the bridle and bit in a position for mounting. When I placed the steel bit against her quivering lips, she tried to rare up but the confining halter rope stopped this.

Again we tried to mount the bridle; again she tried to rear away. After several tries I managed to slip my fingers in the side of her mouth. This caused the mare to open her mouth and I quickly inserted the steel bit. While she was trying to spit it out I slid the leather straps over the drawn back ears. The chin strap was buckled and now Tess was fully harnessed.

I untied the halter rope and, as Dutch went outside of the barn to place the other horse in proper position by the sleigh tongue, I led the nervous, bolting mare from the stall. Before aligning her up with Ole Babe I led her around a while until she became partly used to the harness.

After a while I managed to position her in the proper position at the left of our pilot horse. While Dutch hooked up the neck yoke and then the tugs, I held the horse from bolting. Finally all was ready. A long rope was fastened to the confining halter and then was extended back to Dutch as he placed himself in position at the front of the box.

We were in the open yard, which was covered with a heavy snowfall. The front of the sleigh was pointed toward the open gate and the county road.

At a signal from Dutch, I leaped into the sleigh box and grasped the leather reins.

Then, at a signal Ole Babe started forward. Tess erratically followed trying to escape the confinement of the halter, neck strap, and tugs. Dutch pulled upon the halter rope as I controlled the team with the reins.

After bolting, rearing, and running for about a mile, the new recruit began to respond to the pull of the halter rope and the leather reins.

When we, at last, returned to the yard, Tess was shaking violently and sweating profusely. We carefully unhitched each animal, removed the harnesses, and turned them loose to be with the other horses.

This animal became one of the finest draft animals I have ever seen. I later broke another horse, a gelding called Buck, and used the two as a very good team for many years.

Incidentally, Dad watched as Dutch and I did our thing. We were young teenagers at the time.

Buck, another bay, was also a foal of Ole Babe's. So Buck and Tess were actually half brother and sister.

Note: Tess became so well trained that I was able to lead her mate from anywhere and she would follow and take her proper place to the left of Ole Buck, ready for final hook up.

Our Private Rodeos

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 45)

During my years of growing up I enjoyed riding horses. I always had a good, reliable, saddle horse and I managed to keep some good "leather" for it (them). I used to do some roping but I never became very proficient at it. Also, I rode some in local, homestyle rodeos. Cattle were ridden also. These experiences took place on the ranch as I worked with the local stock.

It was fun for the local ranchers to sponsor a private rodeo. In preparation for these rodeos, several of us

would ride out on the open range, circle for several miles, and drive as many horses and cattle as we could back to the rodeo corrals. The corrals were made of pine poles and were situated on the sandy border between the ranches and the public range.

At this strategic location we would draw lots to see who would ride the animals. We had a regulation bucking chute which held each animal, while it was rigged for riding. Then the assigned rider mounted and the gate was flung open. The bucking area was the wide open range.

There were no prizes given but we always had willing riders eager to try their luck. We did not always go by the rules but we had fun anyway. My specialty was to ride bareback while hanging to a rope surcingle.

I've attended several of these affairs and I cannot remember anyone being injured. Maybe we were just lucky.

Because the animals were property of other ranchers, we posted a sentinel on a nearby hill. If an offended owner should appear, the lookout would signal and those of us at the corrals would release all the stock. After all was clear, we would round them up and continue our fun.

Gould and his horse-drawn plow with his team of draft horses: Flora, Floss, Queen, and Sullivan, ca. 1920s.

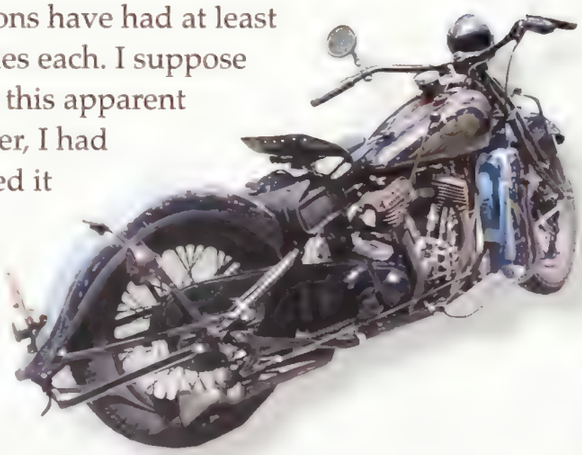
From Gould, Versal learned to care for their horses, which were viewed as strong, silent partners in their successful farm operation. Of his father's care for the animals, Versal wrote: *[My father] was always, because of the constant need, aware of the many horses around the ranch. These were used for draft purposes in operating the various horse-drawn implements. Dad was always proud of his animals and tried to maintain their well being. Saddle horses were kept also. I have personally driven and ridden many of these animals. Dan, Bally, Rock, Big, Tess, Babe, Jip, Buck, and Flora were common names of many of them.*[6]



Photo courtesy Floyd Dean Davis

My Own Motorcycle

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 148)



All of my five sons have had at least two motorcycles each. I suppose they inherited this apparent need from me. However, I had but one cycle and owned it for only a week.

I was in high school at the time and was a seatmate to William Orlob. His brother, Milton, owned a large Indian Chief motorcycle which he wished to sell. I became interested and, after checking it out, I decided to purchase it. The price of $925.00 was agreed upon and I paid $5.00 down. That same evening, after school, I hoarded my new prize and triumphantly rode it home.

The next day was a Saturday and, therefore, no school was held. This was an opportune time for me to race up and down the highway. So, with Dutch riding rumble-seat behind, I sped from our home to Chester then, racing back toward St. Anthony, I, of course, had to try it out. I could easily pass any car. Going in a zigzag pattern across the pavement was fun.

But Dutch and I decided to stop for a moment at the side of the road. While there a state patrol car approached and stopped also. Patrolman Packard walked up to us, viewed the cycle, then said, "Are you boys having fun?"

"Yes, officer, I guess so," I cautiously replied.

"Well, where are you going?" he asked.

"Oh, no where. Just home pretty soon." I supposed he was going to cite me for reckless use of my set of wheels.

"I suppose you know your machine is not legally licensed, don't you?" he asked, more as a statement than a question.

"Well--Uh--Well--Gosh, I don't know," I falteringly replied.

Then he slowly and positively said that the cycle displayed no license plates and was therefore being illegally used on public roads.

I could not deny this. I had not even thought about a license; my only desire was to drive the cycle. I was, of course, ticketed and directed to appear before a magistrate.

My bubble had been burst!!! I solemnly piloted my newly-acquired pride-and-joy back home. I had to pay the traffic fine. Then, when trying to obtain a clear title, I found the previous purchaser could not supply one so I returned the cycle and returned to walking.

Radios Back Then

(Flashback)

Radios, cassette decks, TVs, and what have you, are common today. Any new style hardly causes a mild sensation. But years ago, when radio was first becoming utilized by the common populace, a great interest was noted.

The first common radios were complicated inventions, which used various sources of power. At this time, I, of course, lived on the home ranch and no electric power was available. So, in order to use our large Atwater Kent radio, it became necessary to provide several, large batteries. This assortment included A, B, and C batteries. One of these could be replaced by the common storage battery in an automobile.

Well, I was young, eager, and trying to impress my girlfriends, so I began to innovate. I designed a set-up so I could carry a specialty radio in the 1929 Oldsmobile, which I drove. I devised a special wire, which I simply ran from the car and connected it to a suitable barbed wire fence, which was usually nearby. This actually worked! Of course one had to stay parked — but why not? The music provided atmosphere for other things dear to my heart.

Umm — Free Ice Cream

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 53)

"Lowell, did you see that ice cream?" I asked my good friend, Lowell Keller.

"Boy, I sure did. But why?"

I ushered him into the room where Thelma was 'batching' with some schoolmates. These quarters were in a house near the Ricks College campus. Another group of girls was rooming across the hall. It had been rumored that they were going to have an

ice cream bust that night.

Lowell and I were now in Thelma's apartment. Lowell's girlfriend, Lois Murri, was with us also.

"Let's slip out of here and take that ice cream with us. The four of us can jump in my car and take off," I explained.

Thelma said. "It's dark in that hallway over there. If we're quiet they won't know when we swipe the ice cream."

"I'll gather some bowls and spoons," Lois said.

Ever so carefully we exited from Thelma's apartment. Lowell picked up the handle of the pail of ice cream and we triumphantly rushed into the outside darkness to my 1929 Oldsmobile.

Lowell and Lois put the ice cream inside, then they got into the rear seat. Thelma climbed in beside me as I got behind the wheel. I closed the door and started the motor and drove slowly and quietly away.

"Where shall we go?" Lois asked.

"I know. Do you guys remember those trees at Riverside Gardens? Let's go there," Thelma offered.

"That's a good place; let's go," Lowell said.

"Wow, won't they be surprised!" Lois said.

"I'll bet they'd kill us if we went back," Thelma laughingly added.

Soon we were in the secluded protection of the tree-lined parking area of the famous dance hall located on the south shore of the Snake River. This was about ten miles south of Rexburg, where we had come from.

The bowls were made ready as we moved about some in the car.

"OK, Lowell, open it up. We're ready for all the ice cream we can eat," I said.

Lowell removed the lid from the container, which was still in semi-darkness as it rested on the floor of the car. A terrible odor arose immediately and we wondered why.

"Hey, you guys, we've been took," Lowell exploded.

Sure enough. We had picked up the garbage bucket belonging to the girls' apartment.

Did the girls in that apartment ever hear about this? Absolutely not. The bucket was very carefully replaced. Only smug smiles indicated the heist had ever taken place.

The moral of the story: Thou shalt not steal — especially at night when visibility is poor.

Versal and Thelma during their courtship, 1936.
Versal wrote of this photo: *We dated many times in this 1929 Olds. In later years, after we were married, I converted this serviceable old car into a logging unit.*[7]



Fritz, My Obedient Dog

(Flashback, Journal IV, p. 101)

One evening I had gone from the house to the straw-thatched log cow barn. It was nearing the time when the evening chores were to be taken care of. I happened to look out the east door of the barn and saw Blaine Singleton as he got out of his car and walked through the open gateway in front of the house. He was courting my niece, Alice, and was here to date her for the evening.

My faithful cattle dog, Ole Fritz, was near me and was also watching Blaine as he had done many times before. But this time I decided to have some fun and make this visit quite different.

So, I explicitly said to my dog, "Sic 'im, Fritz — eat him up!"



Blaine and Alice Shosted Singleton, ca. 1939. Alice was the second of four daughters born to Versal's sister, Leatha, and her first husband, Frank Shosted. After their divorce Leatha and her girls lived with Gould and Alice (and Versal) for four or five years until her marriage to Francis (Frank) McFarland in 1928. However, when it came time for Leatha to move out, Alice, who was known to have "favorites," begged — one cousin says "bribed"— her to let her namesake granddaughter stay. Leatha consented and eleven-year-old Alice continued living on the ranch.[78]

I was pleased, yet surprised, to note how quickly Ole Fritz obeyed my command. He growled deeply then raced the 75 to 80 yards to where Blaine was unsuspectingly walking toward the house. He did not bark but his intentions were unmistakable as he ran directly toward Blaine, who tried to fend the dog off by kicking at his attacker.

I did not realize the seriousness of the episode until Blaine yelled for help. I then tried to direct the dog to stop but my orders went unheeded. I rushed to the spot where the fight was taking place and was then able to control the angry dog and permit Blaine to go to the house where he received consolation from Alice.

I was somewhat sorry about my action, yet it had been amusing to see my dog attack. Blaine finally married Alice and became a good supportive husband and father. But now, after 50 years, I still have to chuckle.

"Come On In, Son"

(Flashback, Journal IV, p. 129)

I compose this true story, at this time. In 1986. The contents of such took place over 50 years ago before Thelma and I were married. What transpired remains very vivid in my memory.

"Let's go to a show tonight," I suggested to Thelma and our associates for the evening, Rula Murrie, and her boy friend, Elmer Mathews.

" I heard there is a good one in Idaho Falls and it has a stage act with it, too," Elmer baited us.

"But it's pretty late to go that far," Thelma rather pleadingly replied.

"Oh, we'll hurry," Rula enjoined.

I was sorry that I had mentioned going to a movie as I had not intended to leave the city limits of St. Anthony. It was a 45 mile drive to Idaho Falls. But Thelma and I were guests in Elmer's car and so we reluctantly consented to go along.

After arriving in Idaho Falls we immediately entered the chosen theater. The movie was a long one and it preceded a live performance. This extra attraction took place shortly after midnight, when we would ordinarily be preparing to separate and return home.

The live performance lasted for about 2 hours, after which we exited from the building and started for St. Anthony and home.

I became very pensive as we rode along the long

road home. Furthermore, Elmer and Rula did not seem to be in any special hurry to return.

But finally Elmer dropped Rula off at her home on the southern outskirts of St. Anthony. He then drove to Thelma's home where I bid her good-night. I was then taken to my ranch home where I feared return-ing at so late an hour.

But I thanked Elmer, then I got out of his car and walked to-ward the front steps of the house. Daylight was now starting to brighten the eastern sky behind my back. It was about 400 a.m.!

Quietly I reached for the door knob but before I could do so the door opened and I faced my mother as she stood within the open doorway.

"Come on in, son," she quietly but firmly said, "Get your work clothes on, it is time to start the chores."

That was all she said to me. No questions were asked about where I'd been or what I had been doing. I'm sure she realized that I would have plenty of time in the next 18 hours to regret having been out so late.

You see, I immediately had to take care of the responsibility of doing the morning chores associated with a herd of cows and dry stock.

Then, after breakfast, I was expected to labor in the fields for a long time. The usual evening chores were then con-fronting me. Usu-ally I could ex-pect to finish by about 9 p.m.

Need-less to say, I did not go on any date that night, and I needed no sedatives to induce sleep. I've always appreciated the fact that neither my mother nor dad vo-cally reprimanded me for my misdemeanor.



Photo courtesy Floyd Dean Davis

Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis, ca. 1927.

Versal wrote of his mother's personal characteristics: *She was a fun individual. I've seen her "break loose" into laughter, joking, cajoling, step dancing, and other spontaniety. She was well liked at social and party affairs, where she became an integral part of the fun. Conversely, however, if needful, she could be very serious and demanding. I've been the recipient of her righteous wrath several times. Yet, in each case, I was loved and taught after the punishment.*[9]

Our Courtship

The following is not one of Dad's "Flashbacks" but was written by him on April 10, 1985, two weeks after Mom's death. In the months preceding, Mom had begun her life history and had completed it through May 1934, the end of her high school years (with the exception of a one-page photo essay regarding their courtship on p. 131.) but when her cancer became severe, she was unable to finish it and Dad promised her he would complete her story to the time of their marriage in February 1937. This section is the result. As an introduction he wrote: *"I will pen a brief account of our courtship years following her [Thelma's] graduation from high school. I, no doubt, will omit a great deal, yet, I'll try to record the more fundamental memories, which she and I shared."*[10]

Bernice Olsen, three years older than I, was my niece and was attending St. Anthony High School. During this time she had befriended Thelma and as a result, I became involved in an arranged date with Thelma. It was to take place at commencement exercises for the graduating students of the school. I inject here that I was not one of these as I had quit school after starting my junior year. Nevertheless, I knew Thelma very well and I had always respected her as a brilliant student.

The date proved to be a good one as we enjoyed an evening together. I recall that I kept her flower corsage, which was part of her graduation honors. Incidentally, at this time she was also dating another young man, Leslie Fenton, whom I respected very much. In fact, in later years, we became very good friends. I, also, had dated several other choice young ladies before my first date with Thelma.

Thelma and I dated intermittently for several months until late fall. She went with other fellows and I, of course, with other girls. But during this time we had great fun together as we went to movies, public dances, visit friends, or even to church now and then. She was always very considerate, fun loving, and clean. She never refused to fulfill any date with me.

I, of course, was living on the ranch at the time and she was living with her folks on the south side of St. Anthony. I say here that her parents treated me very cordially every time I met them when I arrived to escort Thelma.

In the fall of the year of 1934, Thelma borrowed $300.00 from her Aunt Fern. This money was used as she enrolled as a student at Ricks College in Rexburg. By this time she and I were beginning to go more "steady" as we both gave up other dating partners. We both had expressed our common love for each other and so long range plans were beginning to develop.



Thelma Hall (seated, center) and Versal's niece, Bernice Olsen (standing, right), are shown with other friends during St. Anthony's Independence Day celebration, on 4 July 1934. Only a month before this photo was taken Bernice had set Versal and Thelma up on their first date together, the night of her high school graduation. Others in the photo are: L-R: Myrdean Clark, Elina Clark (Myrdean's younger sister), and Farrell Wright (Bernice's boyfriend and future husband).

At this time I was using my parents' car, a 1928 Oldsmobile, as a dating unit. Dad and Mother never







Nessie Richman (top) and Maeda Murri were two of Thelma's closest friends during her two years at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho.

Thelma completed the two-year course offered at Ricks and graduated magna cum laude in 1936 with an Associate Degree in Education qualifying her to teach in the elementary grades.

Ricks was a two-year college for decades before becoming the full four-year university known today as BYU Idaho.

Photo courtesy Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society

objected because I took good care of it. Also, Thelma was accepted by them. It became customary for me to transport Thelma and usually two or three of her girlfriends to Rexburg. This was done on Sunday evenings prior to school the next morning. Many times I felt I was quite popular when I was surrounded by all these admirable young ladies. Thelma was very gracious and sweet, however. Some of the more popular girls were Nessie Richman, Lois Murri, Maeda Murri, and Elva Birch. I did, however, have to share some with their own boyfriends. These suitors were also college students who became good friends as time went by. They were Lowell Keller and Beck Black.

Through the winter I managed to date Thelma steadily as we enjoyed many activities together, often with others. I did not date any other girls and I'm sure Thelma had only social relationships with other young men. Our dating was interrupted a time or two because of severe winter weather, when a car was useless. It became necessary to then rely on a team of horses and a bob sleigh. When this happened, I was not able to go all the way to Rexburg. Her father then made suitable arrangements, instead.

The spring and summer months became a repeat of the year before except we were more ideally in love with each other. She worked some to earn additional funds for use in school later. I'll attest to this: she was never reluctant to do what she must to earn money for education. I'll always remember her dedication to that cause.

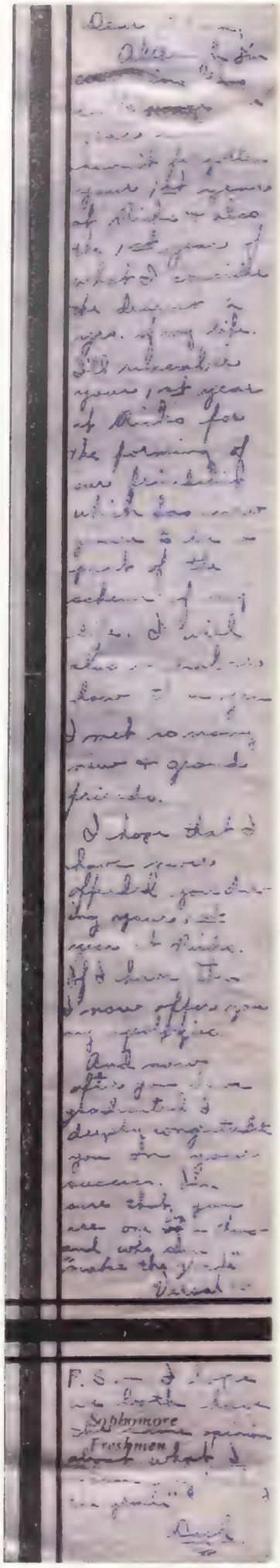
In the fall, she again registered at Ricks College and again we dated as we had done a year earlier. She had moved to a different rooming unit, where she shared expenses with two sisters, Lorna and Wilma Little. They were from Teton Basin.

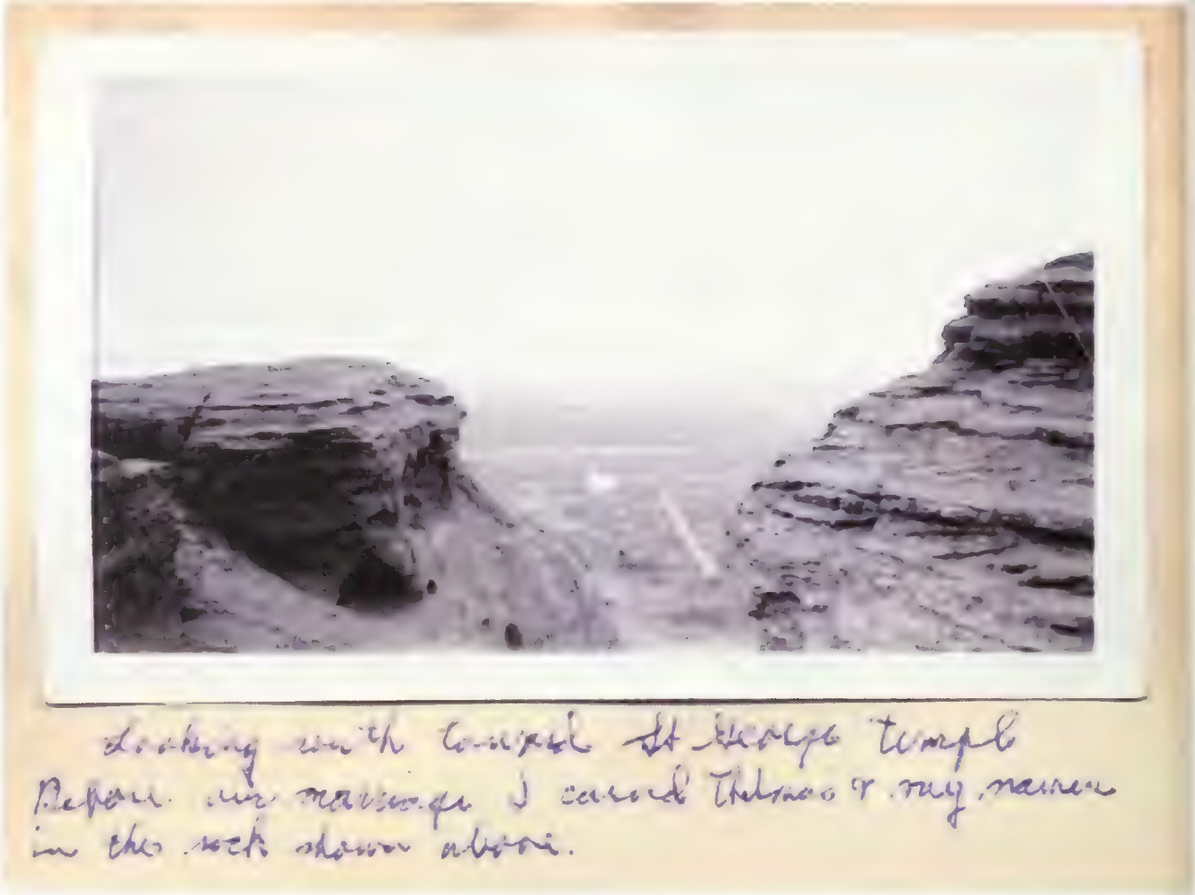
Again she pursued her keen desire to excel in school. This was almost constantly apparent as I observed other students asking her for advice or commenting on her scholastic accomplishments. She was well known and respected by many, many individuals. I became a little pensive at times when several male students befriended her but she remained basically true to me and I'll forever be grateful.

We dated very much the same as during the previous school term. It was great fun and we truly enjoyed our being together. Though we dated about the same way each week, we always treasured each time we were together. Our love was becoming more profound with each passing day.

She graduated from Ricks College with extra high honors. In fact, she had the highest grade point of anyone in the graduating class. However, she could not claim school honors because of the fact she had been absent too many times from some classes. I feel I caused this because I, perhaps, kept her out too late on nights preceding some classes.

Soon after graduation she applied for a teaching contract. This became a reality one day as she and I met [in Rexburg] with school board officials from Chapin, Idaho, in Teton Basin. Incidentally, a strange thing took place, which I here relate. Two witnesses were required to sign the official contract. It became





looking with tourist at Mayan temple
Before our marriage I carved Thelma & my names
in the rock shown above.

Versal had a sentimental, romantic nature, exemplified by the photograph above with his notation, the note he wrote to Thelma at left, and the embroidered photo of himself on p. 91.

Left: Versal penned this note to Thelma in the margins of her "Rixida" (Ricks College yearbook) following her graduation in the spring of 1936. He signed it using his commonly used nickname, "Dark." It says:

Dear Thelma, Although I'm completing this little page [unreadable] one year late, I haven't forgotten your 1st year at Ricks & also the 1st year of what I consider the dearest 2 yrs. of my life. I'll remember your 1st year at Ricks for the forming of our friendship which has now grown to be a part of the scheme of my life. I will also remember how through you I met so many new & grand friends. I hope that I have never offended you during your 1st year at Ricks. If I have then I now offer you my apologies.

And now after you have graduated, I deeply congratulate you on your success. I'm sure that you are one in a thousand who [unreadable] "make the grade." [signed] Versal

P.S. — I hope we both have the same opinion about what I mean by "making the grade." [signed] Dark

necessary to go out on the streets of Rexburg and ask for two people to do this very thing. Out of thousands of people, one individual stood out very clearly. (This had not been previously arranged.) Anyway, who was walking toward us but Thelma's old boyfriend, Leslie Fenton, from Chester, Idaho. I knew him very well and I liked him. You will notice that he signed the school teaching contract!

In the fall of 1936, Thelma commenced teaching in a two-room, rural school in Chapin. This place was a very small brick building, which rested near the main north and south highway and also the railroad, which coursed by. A young, naïve man also taught there. His name was Gene Anderson. I didn't worry about him because of his insincere behavior.

Incidentally, Thelma and Gene roomed and boarded at the very modest home of Cecil and Edith Mangum. They lived about three-fourths of a mile from the school. So commuting was not a serious problem as Thelma and Gene could usually walk to the school. During inclement weather Cecil would transport them by car, or if in snow, by horse-drawn sleigh.

Thelma and I would usually alternate visiting each other on weekends. She would often use my newly acquired '29 Chevy roadster to drive to St. Anthony. I would, of course, do likewise when I went to Teton

Basin. Once in a while the railroad conveyance would be used.

During this time a matter took place, which disturbed me some, yet I justifyingly had trust in Thelma. A young man by the name of Harold Fenton (no relation to Leslie Fenton) stayed at the same home as Thelma did. He was the brother of Edith Mangum. It soon became apparent that he was becoming quite interested in my girlfriend. This was nothing new to me as Thelma was admired by many would-be-suitors. But their almost constant proximity began to cause concerns. I honestly feel that Thelma was true to me but his advances became more and more intentional. Thelma joined others of the neighborhood when they went to Driggs or Victor for various reasons and Harold usually managed to be along, so Thelma was, in a sense, being chaperoned by him. I knew about this but Thelma had reassured me that nothing had or would come of it. I simply put my trust in Mom (Thelma).

During the Christmas holidays (December 1935) Thelma and I were able to spend several days together. It was then, on the 29th day of December, that I claimed her as my own by presenting her a diamond engagement ring. We were both thrilled about this. It was our desire to be married very soon after school terminated in the spring. This planning went well until one weekend when Thelma came to St. Anthony by utilizing the train. We dated that evening and she simply stated that she would very much like to get married the following day. I was somewhat shaken up and asked her why the sudden decision? She plainly told me that Harold Fenton had been pressuring her so much that she must do something to stop his advances and threats. I was somewhat hesitant but after talking it over with her parents (mine were in Arizona), I consented.

So the next day, Feb. 12 (Lincoln's Birthday), we, with her father, drove to Idaho Falls, where we obtained the license and were united in marriage in the Bonneville County Courthouse. This was premature to our former plans but I have never regretted the move. (Incidentally, Harold Fenton immediately left the area and went to Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He never caused any more trouble.)

A wedding shower was held for us in the Chapin Church House and another was sponsored by my parents and was held at our home on the ranch.

Thelma finished her school teaching at Chapin and then immediately I prepared for our being together constantly as we occupied the two north rooms of the ranch home. My parents accepted her very graciously and from that time forth we worked, lived, and loved together.

I wish to state here [in 1985] that my opinion of my sweetheart and wife has been and still is so great that I just can't put my feelings into words. She has never failed to be honest, loving, and devoted. Her record attests to her great worth. I've, indeed, been blessed and will continue to be so. I sincerely pray that all of our worthwhile efforts and our deep love for each other will enable us to again be together — this time, forever in Celestial Glory.



Bonneville Co Courthouse, 1937.
Versal's caption: *"Thelma and I were married in this building on Feb. 12, 1937, a very wintry but memorable day. It is the Bonneville County Court House in Idaho Falls, Idaho"*

Unknown to Versal at the time of Thelma's passing was the existence of a short, ten-page autobiography she had written two years earlier in March 1983. He found it among her things shortly after she died. Of this discovery he wrote:

I was very pleased and very emotional when I found the account. I had not known that such existed!! Therefore, it is very, very special![9]

This page represents the portion of Thelma's 1983 autobiography, which deals with their courtship.

Opposite Page: These images and notes were assembled by Thelma as part of her attempt to complete a more thorough, illustrated autobiography in the months preceding her death in 1985. The page was the last one she was able to complete.

I graduated from St. Anthony High School in 1934. On the night of our graduation, I dated a fellow classmate Versal LaVel Davis for the first time.

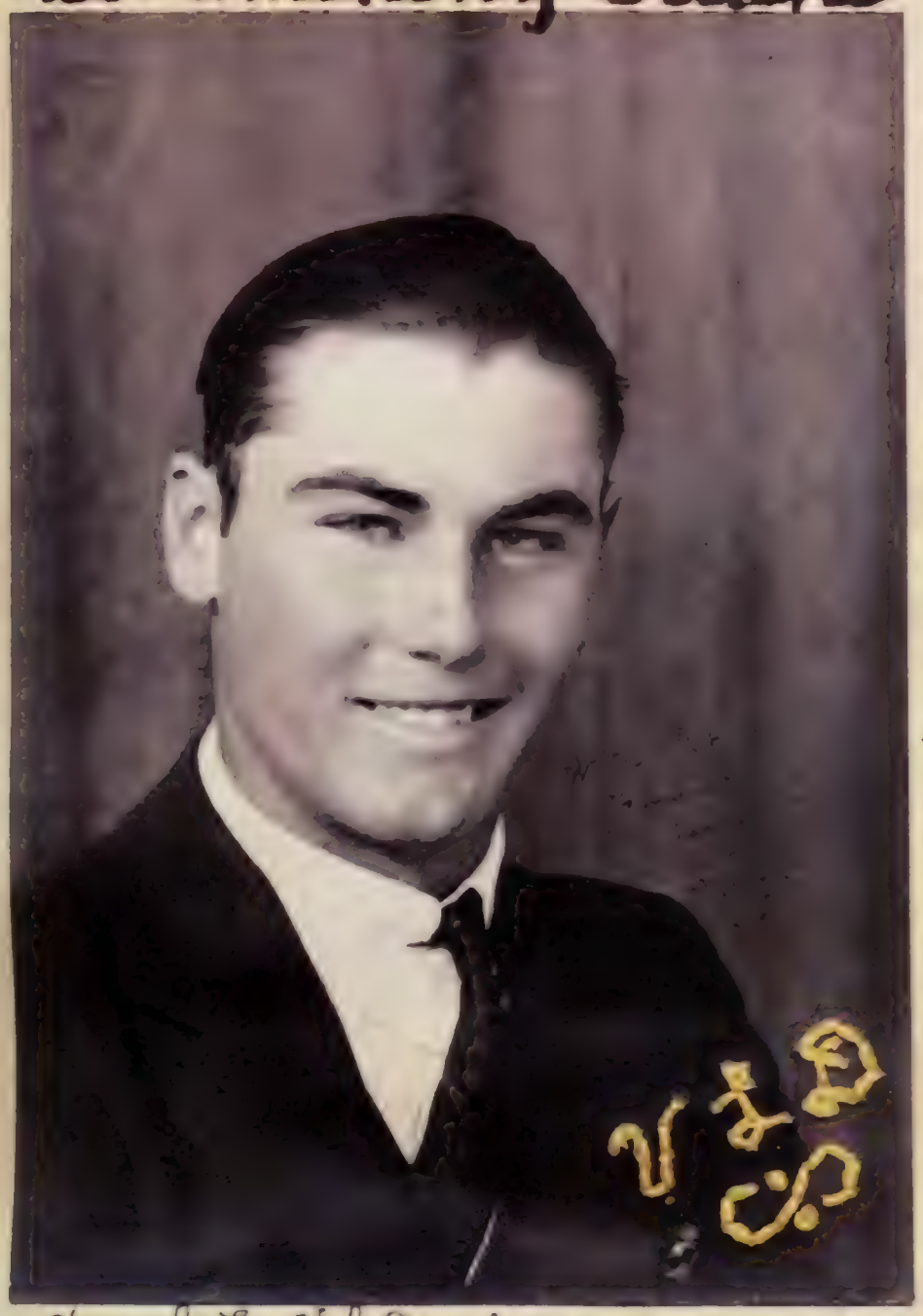
These were the Great Depression years. My family was desperately poor, but I'd always wanted to go to college and become a schoolteacher. I borrowed $300. from my Aunt Fern Birch; I enrolled in Ricks College. By working at odd-jobs and living most frugally, I completed the 2-year course offered there, graduating magna cum laude in 1936 with an Associate Degree in Education qualifying me to teach in the elementary grades.

During 1936-1937 I taught school in Chapin in Teton Basin, Idaho. That was a fierce winter with blizzards closing all roads to car travel. At times temperatures dropped into the -40°s. At the home where I boarded, the well froze solid, so, for 3 months we had to melt snow for bathing and washing; our drinking water was hauled-in by bob-sleigh.

By early 1937 Versal and I had "gone-steady" for 2½ years, but our courtship suffered as a result of my isolation! So, traveling by train ~~included~~ preceded by a huge rotary snow plow, I came out from under the shadow of the mighty Teton Peaks and, on 12 February 1937, attended by my father, Versal LaVel Davis and I were married in Idaho Falls, Idaho by Judge Davis. There was no temple in Idaho at that time.

However, I completed my contract at Chapin-much happier - then in the spring moved to the Davis farm north of St. Anthony, Idaho. By autumn we had saved enough money that, accompanied by Versal's parents, we made the trip to Salt Lake City where we were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple on 17 November 1937.

St. Anthony Idaho, 12 Feb. 1937



Versal La Vel Davis - age 21, 1936
My picture was taken when I was in St. Anthony High School. During my 2 years at Ricks College, I was too poor for picture taking.
And as I tot school at Chapin (I loved teaching) I earned just enough to pay my board and room at Cecil and Edith Mangums + pay on my $300 debt to Aunt Fern Birch. By the end of Jan. 1937, I'd managed to pay $200 of my debt. Versal paid the last $100.
Aunt Fern was a bit disgusted that I'd gone to school, then "wasted" all that money and effort by getting married

These are pictures taken during our courtships.
Versal's was taken in late 1936 while I was teaching grades 1-4 up at Chapin in Teton Basin.
He brot the picture up to me at Mangums where I boarded and, while I was at school, carefully stitched the neat corner signature.
Versal had managed to buy a little green 1929 Chevrolet sports roadster for our trips back and forth between St. Anthony and Chapin, a distance of 55 miles - until the snows came. Our





Thelma Hall, age 17 1934



Versal sits on the fender of his 1934 Chevrolet holding LaVel (3) and Brent (1) with the ranch home in the background, 1940.

Chapter Four

Early Ranch Life

1937-1941

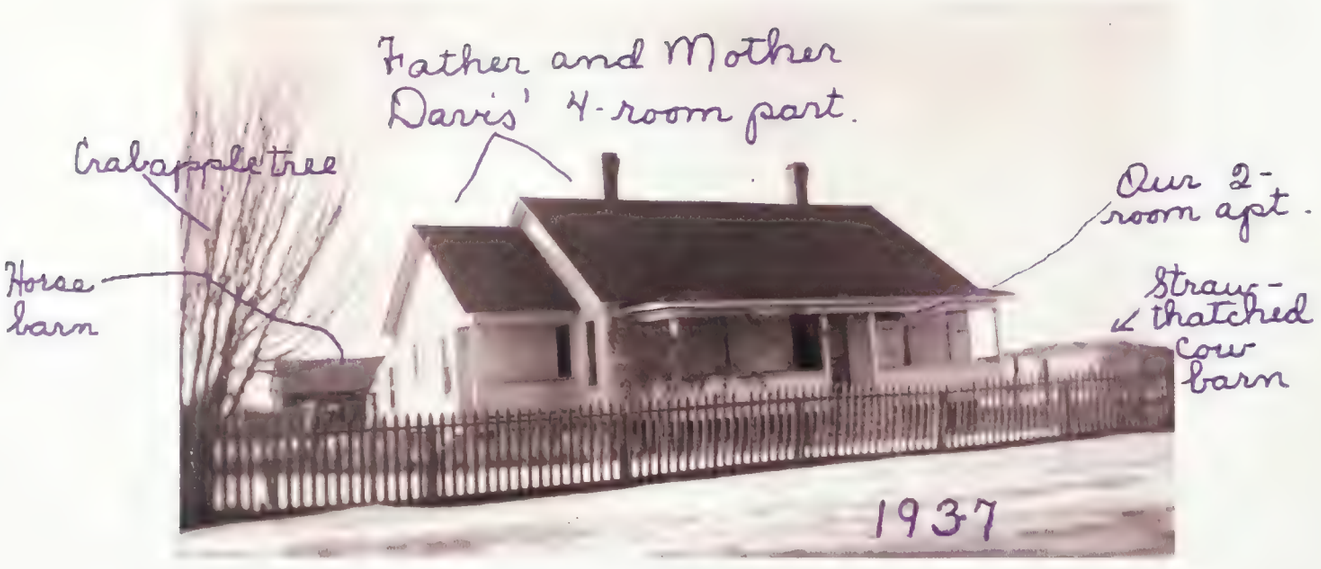
Versal and Thelma enjoyed beginning their lives together on the Davis ranch. Sharing quarters with his parents, Gould and Alice Davis, had its advantages — divided responsibilities and common goals regarding ranch work, give-and-take service between the younger and elder couple, and shared nurturing for the three Davis sons who were born during the ranch years. However, this last advantage proved to be a mixed blessing for the nurturing also produced friction.

Dad diplomatically addressed this dilemma in his history: *When Thelma and I brought LaVel into the world, Mother immediately claimed him. She often said that he was meant to be hers, not ours. This possessiveness caused problems as we attempted to raise our children as a family unit. But I understand how she felt. I was her last child and had been "spoiled" as she was now "spoiling" LaVel. I was now gone from her control but a piece of me, LaVel, was yet available. Also, Mother was becoming quite old and her thoughts of the past had a tendency to rule the present.*[1]

Alice tended to have favorites among the grandchildren;[2] LaVel was definitely one of them. She attempted to dominate his care giving and kept him with her as much as possible, even at night. Her competitive "mothering" created an understandable strain in the household, one that carried through until she died in 1947.



Alice Davis and her favored grandson, C. LaVel Davis, 1939.





Photos courtesy Twila Bird

1937 front and rear views of Gould and Alice Davis' "Last Chance home" (with Mom's labeling).

Grandpa and Grandma Davis named their property after the Last Chance Canal, which flowed nearby. (Today the home's address is 725 Sand Creek Road, St. Anthony, Idaho.)

At the time these photos were taken, when Dad and Mom were newlyweds, they lived in two rooms on the north side of the house, while Grandpa and Grandma Davis, lived in the home's remaining four rooms.

For the first ten years of their marriage, Dad and Mom lived and farmed on the Last Chance property. Versal supported his growing family — three sons born during that time — as well as his aging parents.

Only When It Rained

(Flashback, Journal 1, p. 178)

The long log structure which was used as a cow barn was a simple affair framed of peeled pine logs. The floor was made of small poles laid closely side by side. The roof was made of heavy pine logs used as horizontal rafters. These were laid about 5 feet apart. A layer of common wire netting was placed on these. Then, to serve as a simple roof,

a layer of straw was spread over the entire building.

The combination served well except in rainy weather. In fact, it seemed worse at such times because the moisture would continue to drip through, into the inside, long after the actual rain had stopped.
I used to dread milking time when this condition existed. It was impossible to find a spot which was exempt from the dripping water. This problem also created a nasty underfoot mire of manure. Cleanliness was hard to maintain.

However, this annoyance was felt only in summer prior to haying time. Usually, the first harvest of alfalfa was deposited upon the straw top. From that time until the hay was actually used for cow feed, usually about February or March, the interior was amply protected.

I'm sure Dad would have liked to install a suitable lumber or metal roof but such would have been expensive. In later years, after Dad's death, I remodeled the horse barn into a cow barn. It had a lumber roof. (The straw-thatched cow barn and the lumber-roofed horse barn are pictured in the upper photo on the opposite page.)

I enjoyed this fresh milk especially after it had rested in a ten-gallon can overnight and the thick rich cream had risen to the top. The [milk] was used for drinking and the thicker part [cream] was utilized for cereals and warm drinks.

Very, very, rich ice cream was often made from the creamy product. The finished product was truly ice cream, not watered-down [like the so-called ice cream] one consumes now. Different fruits and nuts made the delicacy a very enjoyable treat.

I've made many batches of homemade ice cream as I've turned, by hand, a crank-operated freezer.

Perhaps the product then was more fattening but people used to be more active physically than they are now. I know I never gained weight by consuming this delicious treat but I also know that I expended much more energy then. So which is best? I hesitate to say, but I know which tasted better.

Milk and Ice Cream Back Then

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 147)

Milk was a common item on the ranch as we always kept twenty to thirty head of milk cows at all times. This herd produced gallons and gallons of milk every day and it was not unusual to have several ten-gallon cans ready for route pickup every morning.



Photograph by Rob Byron. Used with permission.

The Ground Was Alive With Them

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 59)

Shortly after our marriage a huge infestation of crickets took place in the area where we lived. These pests were the same kind that laid waste to the crops of the early pioneers of Utah. They became known as Mormon Crickets, but the actual title is the 17-year cicada.

Under favorable conditions these insects incubate from eggs which were laid 17 to 18 years previously. The years about 1938 and 1939 were apparently ideal for this cycle reoccurrence.

The eggs hatch in spring and the small, immature crickets remain in countless hordes in sagebrush areas. After they are about one-third grown, they, by strange instinct, start migrating. They will start in a predetermined direction and then "march" ever onward with very little variance.

This movement is a relentless forward push. I have seen hordes of these crickets as they crossed the county road which ran by our home. There were so many of these one-and-a-half-inch long insects that the road surface seemed to flow as the crickets crossed over it.

The millions of crickets consume practically all greenery as they proceed. They, of course, grow rapidly as they march several miles across the terrain. When they emanate from the arid sagebrush range, they enter the farmland adjoining. Here they devour entire fields of grain, hay, potatoes, etc.

Only large canals will stop their forward progress. It seems that nature commands them to go directly forward. They will try to go over an obstacle rather than go around. It was not unusual to see them climbing up the sides of buildings as they tried to obey this strange command.

These hordes had destroyed many fields before concerted action was taken by local farmers and county personnel. Then huge bulldozers gouged deep ditches along the borderland edge. These excavations were edged with pine 1" X 8" boards. The boards had strips of shiny tin nailed along the upper side. This was to prevent the crawling insects from going up and over the board, which was staked in an edge-up position. These [pine board and tin] "fences" would sometimes

Below: A pine board and tin fence lines a deep ditch but barely contains the mass of onward-moving insects in their relentless surge across a field on the Davis ranch in the late 1930s.

Inset: Migratory grasshoppers cover plants and fill the sky in this photo taken on the Davis ranch during the late 1930s.



extend for a mile or more.

The hordes of crickets would cluster in the ditch area in front of the fence. Here they were covered with dirt or were killed by burning with weed burners. Patrolling these fences required constant all-day, all-night vigils.

Sometimes holes were dug along the fence. The insects would fall into these and a shovel full of dirt would permanently bury them.

I have spent many days constructing fences, making steel stakes from old potato digger chains, patrolling with a shovel, and using a weed burner.

This fight continued for about two years then an insect spray was developed, which when used on the newly-hatched insects, seemed to control and destroy them. We were happy to have the pests brought under control but one adverse condition developed. It was this: the thousands of sage hens which had previously inhabited the range had been virtually destroyed also, no doubt by the same spray used to kill the crickets.

An additional note: These voracious pests would destroy leather and cloth articles. Harness, saddles, and similar things would have to be protected. Thelma had to take special care in hanging out the wash as even clothes could be riddled.

Thousands at a Time

Our ranch bordered the open sagebrush range, which extended for miles and miles west and north of the ranch property. This was ideal habitat for thousands upon thousands of sage hens. (Some places they are called prairie chickens.) During summer months the birds would remain on the open range during daytime. At evening they would fly to the irrigated fields to eat grasshoppers, other bugs and some alfalfa buds.

It may sound incredulous to many who may read this account, but I can honestly say I have seen these grey-feathered birds in flocks so large and dense that they appeared as a cloud while flying overhead. These were so numerous that a two week open hunting season was declared and a hunter could shoot and harvest twenty-five birds per day.

I have often hunted these for food. When cooked properly they are delicious. I well recall how Thelma used to cook and bottle many, many of the birds. We often were able to consume them any day of the year.

It was not unusual, when mowing hay, to maim these birds. When discovered, we would finish killing them and then dress them out for table use.

When these wonderful birds were plentiful it was not unusual to shoot two to three birds with one shot. This was done by using a shotgun as they arose as a dense flock before the hunter.

I became very adept at collecting the younger birds. They were the choice eating specimens. These would be found with a mother hen. They had a tendency to remain so until almost fully grown. The trick was, by using a .22 caliber rifle, to shoot the mother hen first, then the young ones could be shot in the head very easily as they would not fly.

Sadly, the numerous flocks became almost non-existent after an infestation of "Mormon crickets" in the early '40's. In order to control the devastation of the crickets a poison bran was developed. This was placed in problem areas on the open range. It was effective in controlling the insect pests but, at the same time, it killed all but a very few of the sage hens. To this day, 40 years later, the sage hens have not regained the enormous numbers that formerly existed.

In later years the hunting season has been for only two days and only two birds may be shot each day.



Linoleum

(Flashback)

Oh, that is gorgeous! I wish I had one like it," young Mrs. Barney exclaimed. This was a remark made by a neighbor of Thelma's and mine, when we lived on the ranch. I had recently purchased a brown and gold linoleum floor covering for our living room floor. It did not fit wall to wall; there was a two-foot border all around the room. But Thelma had very meticulously waxed the linoleum and it was shining very brightly.

This floor covering was not unusual, except it brings into focus at this time the difference between the situation now and as it existed then. It seems incredulous that we were so elated to have new linoleum, even if it only covered part of the floor.

There is a huge contrast between what seemed sufficient then as compared with our general needs now. At this time a rug is expected to cover the entire floor area. A rubber pad or something similar is also used beneath any fabric-type covering.

I don't mean to infer that today's custom is not good, but I actually feel that appreciation for a simple, partial, linoleum covering was enjoyed as much as the splendid wall-to-wall placements that are common today.

I've often wondered what the transition was like for those who replaced dirt floors with wooden ones. Perhaps the simple improvement seemed somewhat unnecessary then also.

What will the next generation bring?

Fresh Ice Each Morning

(Flashback, Journal V, p. 56)

With [today's] automatic heating systems it's hard to believe that years ago things were vastly different.

I well remember when Thelma and I, after our marriage, lived in the two north rooms of the ranch home. We had no piped-in water, no central heat, and no electricity.

We had a wood-burning cook stove in one room and a tin wood-burning heater in the other. While these were being used the rooms could be heated sufficiently to keep comfortably warm, but after the wood had burned away the rooms soon became very cold. Often, after going to bed, with several blankets and quilts (no cold sheets), the rooms became cold enough that ice would freeze in the wash dish or any other similar container.

When the weather was especially cold we would often use only one room. This would require less fuel and attention.

LaVel and Brent were born under these humble circumstances.

At this time, in 1981, I remember the situations very clearly but I do not remember any unpleasant suffering. In fact, those were good days filled with great memories.



Mom warms infant LaVel in Grandma Alice Davis' kitchen, near the ranch home's "Majestic Stove," during the bitter winter-cold of February 1938.



Mom with baby Brent and 2-year-old LaVel, Jan. 1940.

Were They Worth It?

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 63)

The storm was worsening and so was Thelma. We were living in our two-room section of the ranch home and the month of February had just rolled around. This was Thelma's first pregnancy and she was beginning to feel real labor pains.

It was decided that I had better telephone the doctor. So, excitedly I did so and Doc Ellison said he would soon be out.

I worried about the storm, wondering if the doctor could get through. But, thankfully, I soon saw his car lights as he drove toward the ranch home.

[My sister] Vera was also with us as she assisted Mother and the doctor. Even I was directed to administer the anesthetic.

Soon, I became the new father of a new baby boy. All went well and soon the doctor planned to leave. He packed his medicine bag and stepped outside, peered around, then promptly re-entered the house. The snow was failing heavily and drifts were developing over the roadway.

He simply said, "I'll be staying here tonight. Do you have a place where I can sleep?"

Mother prepared the open couch for him. This was in her part of the house.

Because of the storm we had the consolation of knowing that medical help was very near. However, by morning the storm had abated and I, with team and bobsleigh, proceeded with Doc Ellison, as I pulled his car to the main road.

This complete service, prenatal and all, cost me $25.00. Incidentally, when Brent was born, under similar circumstances (less the storm), I was charged $35.00. Were they worth it?

LaVel's Birth

(Written by Thelma Hall Davis, 24 Feb. 1972)

When I awoke that wintry February the First morning, I knew that my delivery date had arrived at last, for my "water had broken" during the night. Excitedly we made ready for the arrival. A full $10 worth of medicines, a list given by the doctor to each expectant mother, had been purchased: such things as ergot (a bitter medicine used in case of hemorrhage), sterile gauze, vaseline, lysol and iodine for disinfectants, and olive oil (which we had

taken to church to be consecrated on a previous Fast Sunday; this consecrated oil I still have in our home; it is used for anointing in administering to the sick). Old sheets and rags and newspapers had been assembled.

As the day wore on, I had a few uncomfortable moments, but I didn't know just what to expect or how I should feel. Mother and Father Davis checked into our apartment occasionally to see how I was progressing. Versal had hurried briskly out to milk and feed the cows (assisted by Mother Davis; she always helped with the cows — her energy and the economy of her life demanded it). He had pitched down hay for the horses and dry stock. Several times Versal had come in with, "How do you feel now?"

At 10 A.M. Versal, carrying a bucket of warm water to "prime the pump" with, went down to the old pump behind the straw-topped, log cow-barn to pump water for the thirsty animals. Long-haired, festooned with wisps of straw from their beds and hay leaves from their breakfast, saliva icicles around their mouths, butting and jostling each other for position around the long, wooden, icicled trough, the 50-odd head of black and white cattle mooed gently as Versal, bundled against the cold approached — a tall, powerful figure wearing his familiar knee-high boots. The nearest cows sidestepped or backed-off to clear his path to the pump. Soon the lowing ceased and only the squeak-rhythmic and metallic — of the pump could be heard.

Our "apartment" was the 2 north rooms of the John Gould Davis ranch home. However, Versal and I had moved our bed (it was the only piece of furniture in our bedroom anyway) into the kitchen, the largest room, because of the intense cold. We had to be closer to our only source of heat — my beautiful, white, new coal-range (the only new piece of furniture we'd bought when we married). It was white-enameled with a water-reservoir on the right side of the firebox. I carried water daily to fill it from Mother D's apt.



Dad holds newborn LaVel on the steps of the Davis ranch home with trusty Brownie at his side, February 1938.

Mother and Dad Davis were indeed anxious for this slow grandchild to arrive: they were a month overdue on their annual temple-trip to St. George, Utah or Mesa, Arizona, or both. Dr. Ellison had computed my due-date to be Jan. 15th, but revised it back to Jan. 1 because "most first babies come about 2 weeks early." But nature, and especially Davis baby boys take their own sweet time; and, while Grandpa and Grandma fretted and Versal and I waited, we were assured, as Grandma Davis always said, "When the apple is ripe it will fall!" Every time I mixed bread, kneading it while trying not to bump my stomach too much or too hard, I'd think, "I hope this is the last batch I'll have to make before it comes." But I had to think that 6-8 times.

But at last I was ready! So was the weather. A threatening blizzard descended about noon. Because of the weather and my few pains, the doctor was called in early afternoon.

Mother Davis could have delivered the baby herself as she was a midwife of no small reputation around St. Anthony, Twin Groves, and Chester, with several hundred deliveries and assists to her credit. But the modern, safe thing to do was to have a doctor (and ether!) deliver the baby with a mid-wife or just a neighbor housewife assisting. Nurses were unheard

of, as were hospital deliveries in the rural area where we lived.

Dr. Ellison arrived about 4 P.M., carefully forwarding and backing his car between the high snowbanks in the road in front of the house until he had turned it around and had it headed toward town. Parking his car close to the snowbank in front of the picket gate, he climbed out, lowered his head against the stinging snow and came in blowing and stomping, carrying his black bag glistening and dripping.

After a precursory examination, Dr. Ellison announced that the baby would be "some hours yet in coming," so he went in, sat by Grandma's coal heater and warmed himself. As the wind howled and beat snow white against rattling windows, premature night descended; Dr. Ellison became warm, comfortable and sleepy. He complained once or twice that "I'd ought to go make another call or 2, then come back, but I'm not sure I can get out." Versal flatly told him that he'd hitch up old Buck and Tess and pull his car to the highway (½ hour) for him after the baby was delivered, but not before.

So, Dr. Ellison, looking relieved, went to bed on Mother Davis' bed and slept until about 10 P.M. By then the baby and the blizzard were both exerting themselves full force. No longer did I doubt what was happening inside me. Mother Davis had carefully padded the bed heavily with newspapers, then clean old sheets. She'd prepared teakettles of boiling water, laid out my "supplies," and the baby's "receiving clothes."

At the last stages of the delivery, my face having been vaselined and a breathing mask applied over my nose, Versal was taught how to drip the ether onto the mask — he became an anesthesiologist in one 2-minute lesson. He did become somewhat panicky for, they said I yelled and cried, but Dr. Ellison and Mother Davis reassured him.

Vel was born shortly before midnight — a 7 lb., black-haired normal son with an intensely proud father and mother. I served my full 10-days-abed sentence — ten days was a must, "the ninth day is the most dangerous for 'back-sets' — arose light-headed and prickle-footed, and the senior Davises departed southward, leaving 2 bewildered greenhorn parents and a yowling little black-headed baby plus 50-odd head of stock.

Oh! Dr. Ellison slept overnight. Versal hooked up old Buck and Tess and dragged the doctor's car through snowdrifts to the highway on a beautiful, white, new morning.

Careful, Go Slow

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 105)

Once, early in our marriage, Thelma and I decided to go fishing at Sand Creek. This was a small, clear stream which emanated from the mountains about 15 miles north of the ranch.

This was, and still is, a beautiful area, laced with pine trees, mountain willows, aspens, and other greenery. The stream wound among all these as it went around lava banks, through sandy meadows, and flower bedecked flats.

We were slowly walking along this rambling stream when we spied a skunk ahead of us. Our first impulse was to immediately retreat and let the animal have the right of way. However, we noticed that it was struggling to escape from a steel trap, which had clamped upon the left front foot of the skunk. Indications of its having been there for several days were evident. I felt sorry for the trapped animal and I did not want to see it suffer longer. So —

"Thelma, you stay here and don't you dare get any closer. You know these things can discharge scent for quite a long ways."

"Dork, you can't release that animal," she replied as I lay flat on the ground.

"Well, I'm going to try anyway," I somewhat apprehensively said.

"You come back here. You're crazy to try that."

"Yea, I guess I am but I'll be careful. I'll go real slow."

Then I crawled slowly while flat against the ground. The skunk eyed me with its little black eyes. It backed away as far as the chain of the trap would permit. Still proceeding very, very slowly and cautiously, I, after about thirty minutes, was staring the animal in the face and at arms length. I reached forward with both arms, carefully grasped the trap, slowly opened the confining jaws, and then I remained perfectly motionless. The freed animal moved from the trap, crippled hurriedly away, and I took a deep breath of relief.

A New Innovation

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 26)

Most people who will read this entry will not remember when the now-common, ballpoint pen made its debut in the writing field.

I was living on the ranch near St. Anthony, Idaho when I first saw the new marvel. I recall the occasion very clearly. It went like this;

I had made a trip from the ranch to St. Anthony to do some shopping and also to send a postal money order to Sears Roebuck and Co. I filled out the special form, which was in use at the time and then I stepped to the postal clerk's window and said, "Well hello, Ray. How are you doing? How is that venison you got when we went to Robinson Bar?"

"Say, Verse, that's good stuff. That was a fun hunting trip."

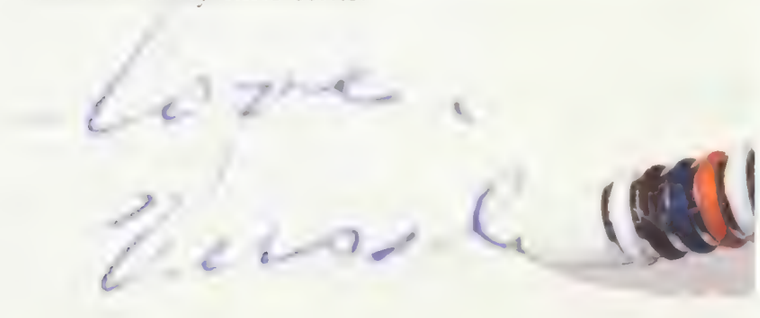
I replied, "It surely was and I'm hoping we can get together again next year."

"Well, what can I do for you here today?" Ray Carter asked.

"Just take care of this money order for me," I answered, whereupon I slid the application form through the window opening. Ray placed it in a readable position in front and then started to fill out the money order form. I glanced at his writing hand and noticed a large, odd-tipped, writing tool he was gripping. He used it easily and smoothly. My curiosity overcame me and I asked, "Ray, I don't mean to be nosey but what kind of a pen have you got there?"

"Oh yes, take a look at this thing. It's the latest thing out. It's called a ballpoint pen. Cost me a load of dough though - twenty bucks. Try it out."

I accepted and then I used the new marvel of invention. It worked beautifully. But twenty bucks?! Now, in this time of high inflation, one can duplicate such for thirty-nine cents.



TWILA'S NOTE: During my preparation for this book's publication, I became curious when I read this story about the novelty of pens. I began looking through old family documents and sure enough, I discovered that until the 50s Dad and Mom both used pencils, not pens, to jot notes, write letters, and record information into farm log books — a mundane detail I'd not noticed before.

Forty Years of Regret

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 112)

I pulled the starter rope on the small Briggs and Stratton gas engine. The engine sputtered a bit and then roared to full speed. The homemade lathe was, in turn, motivated into motion as it turned a large, steel, drilling metal bit. I grasped a small pulley with my slip-joint pliers. I was going to enlarge the shaft hole in the center of the steel pulley. Gripping the pliers firmly I placed the part against the turning bit.

Then it happened — so quickly, so violently! Before I knew what had taken place I had fallen to the floor. I instinctively clasped my hand over my left eye and regained my feet. I stopped the gas motor, then observed my wet hand. It was saturated with a watery substance mixed with blood.

I must have been in shock because I remember very little pain at this time. I walked about one hundred yards to the house where I showed Thelma my problem and asked her to remove whatever was in the eye.

"Oh Dork, what happened?" she exclaimed in horror. "Your eye is collapsed like a paper bag.

I briefly told her what I had been doing. But she listened only momentarily as she wiped the blood and water from my face.

"We've got to get you to a doctor immediately."

Clasping a white rag over my eye, I followed her to our car, which she quickly started and headed for St. Anthony. The eye was now beginning to pain me a great deal and I thought the three miles would never end.

She had arranged to meet a doctor in his office, which was up a flight of stairs on west Main Street. When I managed to sit down after entering his office, he examined the injured eye. His hands shook as he did this. The pain was almost unbearable and I grew

faint with the torment of it.

The doctor placed a pain-killing solution in the eye. This sedative had very little effect except to deaden my throat. He said he would have to suture the eye. While preparing the needle, his hands trembled terribly and I wondered if perhaps I might suffer even more damage.

Then, after threading the needle, he stood by me, tilted my head back, warned me to brace myself and then proceeded to suture the cut eye.

As he started an amazing thing took place — his composure became perfect; his hands were very steady and his voice was calm. I can remember very, very vividly how he penetrated the outer eye cover then pulled the suture material through. The sensation was terrible. The thread felt like a huge rope as it was drawn through the injured section of the eye.

After completing the surgery and bandaging the eye, he immediately sat in a chair and smoked. This he did incessantly for several minutes while again trembling a great deal. Then he arose, called a specialist in Pocatello and made arrangements for my admittance into the St. Anthony hospital there.

Thelma then drove me back to the ranch where I spent a long, painful, sleepless night. My nearby brothers, Floyd and Wayne, took over the farm chores. Wayne and Thelma drove me the 50 miles to Pocatello where I was admitted.

The specialist inspected the injury and said the suture was perfectly placed and that the eye had refilled with fluid.

I was told, however, that if the slightest sign of infection appeared the eye would be removed. This worried me a great deal but I was comforted somewhat by his saying, "You have a good chance to retain the eye because you are in perfect health. You do not smoke or drink. You can consider yourself very fortunate."

I lost the clear vision of the eye but I am still able to see enough that I have good perception.

The regret is that this injury happened on Sunday. I should not have been involved in doing what I was doing on the Sabbath Day.

A P.S. to this story:: I wish to comment more about the doctor who sutured my damaged eye. This man was a tall, middle-aged individual with pleasing facial features. I know nothing about his private life except what I will relate here.

Most of us proceed on through life and give little heed or credit to obscure individuals who have influenced our behavior. I don't want to be classified as having done this in respect to this special doctor.

I am deeply indebted to him for the fact that he literally saved the sight of my left eye. What happened to him very soon after my injury makes my story important and unusual.

You see, about six weeks after helping me he was admitted to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for drug addiction treatment!! He never left there alive!!

Was I lucky or was this man very special when others, such as I, needed him desperately?

Yes, sometime, somewhere, I expect to see him again and personally express my belated thanks.

Regardless of apparent behavior, some people are yet very special.

Also, it seems incredulous, but his fee was very, very low — $10.00.

I'm ashamed, but I don't even remember his name.



My Mistake

(Flashback, Journal I, p. 141)

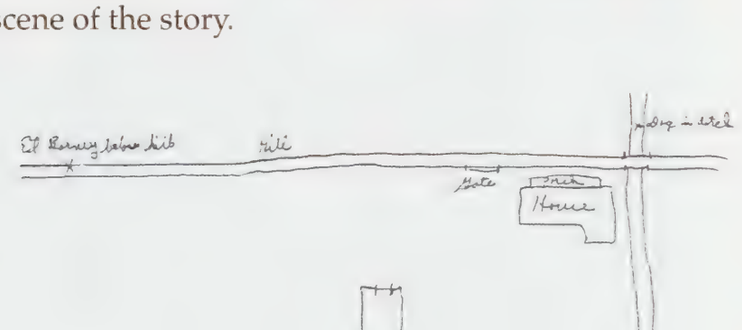
All the ranches in our neighborhood had been plagued with stray dogs which had repeatedly stampeded groups of cattle. This was done usually at night when identification of the guilty dogs was difficult. Therefore, supposition became prevalent and all dogs became suspects.

These nightly onslaughts caused cattle to become injured, fences were impaired and cattle were scattered among the several ranches.

My cattle had been struck several times, and therefore, I was eager to identify and destroy the dogs doing the damage.

So this true story:

I was cleaning the inside of our log cow barn. This was a long structure facing east and west. A door was at each end. The barn was about one-half block from the county road running north and south. The east end faced the road. The sketch below identifies the scene of the story.



Drawing by Versal Davis

I had almost finished my task in the barn when I was almost knocked down by a red steer which had entered the east door. The animal was breathing heavily and was spooked badly. Looking outside, I saw a shaggy, black and white dog running from the barn toward the open gate bordering the road.

I glanced up and down the road and could see no one. I immediately supposed that I caught this dog in the act of chasing this steer. So, I quickly ran to the house, grabbed my .22 rifle and stepped onto the open porch of the house. The dog was standing in the open ditch across the road. It was quenching its thirst.

Taking positive aim, I then fired. The dog leaped into the air and then ran north along the road. I watched it go as far as it could. It then collapsed and died at the side of the road.

I felt I had done the community a favor until I glanced farther up the road. There came my neighbor as he rode horseback. I had killed his personal cattle dog!

After laying my rifle down, I sheepishly walked to meet him. I said, "Ed, I'm sorry I killed your dog. I didn't see you below the hill back there. I thought it was one of the dogs, which have been giving us so much trouble."

"That's OK, Verse. The son of a b____ shouldn't have been so far ahead of me. Serves him right."

I had no more to say except I would bury the dog. Edgar Barney and I still remained good neighbors.

Incidentally, at a later date, I did identify and destroy a female dog, which was causing males to gather in packs. This stopped the frequent problems.

Dogs I've Owned

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 132)

Man's best friends" have always been loved by me. I have owned several dogs, some very good and some worthless. On the ranch a good cattle dog was a necessity. Because of this I tried to keep a good shepherd dog at all times.

I have owned various other breeds such as bird-dogs and sled-dogs but these were not kept for long periods because they were useless except as pets.

One of the best cattle dogs I have ever seen was one I called Fritz. This dog was not a pet. In fact, he resented being patted, even by me, his owner. His usefulness as a cattle dog, however, was beyond reproach. It was amazing to watch this animal instinctively control cattle and horses. He was of a breed commonly called "English Shepherd." He possessed one black eye and one white eye. This was a very unusual thing among dogs.

But Ole Fritz had one characteristic, which I was forced to reckon with — he seldom barked and was, therefore, a sudden unannounced terror to small children as they passed by our house.

One time a neighbor's little girl was walking by when Fritz walked to the side of the road on which the Howard child was proceeding toward her home. She saw the dog and to protect herself, she picked up a small rock to cast at the watchful dog. But, quick as a flash, Fritz attacked gripping the girl's outstretched

arm. I happened to see the attack and immediately called the dog away from the little girl. Her wrist was opened and was bleeding. Thelma and I treated the wound and then took her home. After this near tragedy I was forced to kill the dog. This I did with great reluctance as I loved this animal but its aggressive nature could not be tolerated. (NOTE: Read Dad's sequel to this account titled, "Old Fritz and the Howard Girl: An Encounter 40 Years Later," is on p. 277.)

Another dog, "Old Brownie," was a half brother to Fritz. This one, however, had many of the needed characteristics of his half-brother but was an ideal kid's dog as well. I dearly loved this precious animal for many years. He became a constant companion to our three oldest sons as they roamed here and there around the ranch. I could always tell where the boys were by whistling. This caused Old Brownie to come running. I then knew which direction to search for LaVel, Brent and Brian. When Thelma and I left the ranch in 1947, we left Brownie with the new owners. I knew he would be better off if we left him on the domain he knew so well.

Other notable dogs have been a black and white bird-dog called Ring and another cattle-dog, which belonged to Warren, named Buzz. Old Buzz was really part-breed shepherd and part bird-dog. Warren accidentally shot the dog one day while they were hunting pheasants.



"January 1942. Granddad Davis, Thelma LaVel, Brent, and a favorite dog, Browni get together for a picture." (Dad's notation for this photo in the family album.) And Mom wrote: "The photo was taken on the south porch of the Davis ranch home just two months before Gould's death."



Photo courtesy Dean Davis

Gould (rear) and his son, Wayne (better known as "Pat") with the Davis' dog, "Ring" the family ranch, ca. mid-1930s.

Yellowstone Then

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 90)

Shortly after our marriage in 1937, Thelma and I, together with Austin and Rula Price and Lowell and Zola Keller, made plans to spend a week in Yellowstone Park. This was about 1940. [Twila's note: It was the summer of 1941.]

It was decided that Austin would furnish the conveyance, a 1937 Chevrolet. I would provide a small, homemade flat-bottom boat with a two-wheel trailer. A newly-acquired Sears and Roebuck outboard motor was also my contribution.

Those of us with small children made arrangements for their care, while we would be gone. A tent was secured and other things such as food, fishing tackle, and suitable clothing were also gathered together.



Old Faithful

Soon we were on our adventurous way to see Yellowstone Park. This tourist attraction was very pristine in those days. Campgrounds were ample and little traffic was noted. Fishing in the lakes and streams was fabulous. Bears and other wildlife were common sights.

We had driven directly to West Thumb of Yellowstone Lake. Soon, we had pitched our canvas-wall tent and otherwise prepared our camp.

"Hey, look at those fish rising on the lake," Lowell excitedly exclaimed.

"Where is my pole?" Austin asked.

Soon, we three men were rigging our fly rods and were preparing to wade into the clear waters of this beautiful lake. One could actually see the large cutthroats as they swam leisurely around. Rather than use rubber boots, we simply waded into the cold water.

Casting my fly line tipped with a yellow-bodied grey hackle, I almost immediately hooked a nice trout.

"How about that, I got one the very first cast," I exclaimed in triumph. But my special honor did not last long. Both Lowell and Austin were soon playing beauties also.

That evening we each caught our limit of ten fish. You can guess what we ate for supper. However, we could not consume all we caught so we canvassed the camp area and gave the extras to appreciative tourists.

The next day we launched the boat and trolled. This was done by simply attaching a Colorado spinner to the fly line. Only three of us could ride in the boat; two fished while the other handled the motor. It was interesting to be the tiller and also coach the women as they also fished.

Fishing was tremendous as we caught 60 fish per day! Again, we gave most of these to awed tourists.

After three days we voted to travel the large loop and see more of the park but as we neared a bisecting road, we decided to circle back to our fishing success area. This we did and there we stayed until time to return home. Needless to say, we proudly returned with 60 choice trout from the clear waters of Yellowstone Lake. Being with such friends as the Prices and the Kellers was wonderful and I treasure the memory of our six days together.

I often think of how simple it was then — an ordinary car, a simple tent, ordinary blankets for a bed, simple foods, practical cooking and eating items, multipurpose fishing rods and a simple homemade rowboat.



Versal, Thelma, Austin, Rula, Zola, Lowell

Being with such friends as the Prices and Kellers was wonderful and I treasure the memory of our six days together.

The fishing was great; the campgrounds were clean and uncrowded; the scenery was gorgeous; and animals and birds were in profusion.

Such is very different today. There are rigid camping regulations; no fish can be kept; entry fees are higher; and traffic is horrendous. Seeing much wildlife is very unusual.



Opposite Page: Old Faithful photo taken by Dad or Mom, summer 1941. St. Anthony's close proximity to Yellowstone National Park made visits there easy and pleasurable during the Davises Idaho years. To this day (2011) Yellowstone remains a favorite vacation destination in the Davis family.

Top: The 1941 Yellowstone gang: Versal & Thelma Davis, Austin & Rula Price, and Zola and Lowell Keller. This group of friends remained close and kept in touch throughout their lives.

Right: Dad with an enviable string of trout. Fishing remained his main source of relaxation until his death in 1989.

What Bait Are You Using?

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 95)

The four of us drove into West Yellowstone at about midnight. Lowell Keller, Blaine Murri, Oliver Virgin, and I had previously made plans to fish at Hebgen Lake. This mountain-sided body of water was about ten miles beyond West Yellowstone. We planned to drive on to there after we had purchased our out-of-state fishing licenses. This we immediately did and then we visited several night spots and observed the questionable activity going on there. When we finally agreed to continue on to the lake it was nearly 3 A.M.

After arriving at the lakeside campground, we simply spread out our sleeping bags and 'sacked out.'

"Hey, you guys, it's coming daylight," Oliver shouted. Looking at my watch I observed that it was about 4 A.M. — one hour of sleep!

Groggily, we emerged from our sacks and prepared to do some early morning fishing.

Three of us, Oliver, Lowell and I had agreed to go out on the lake. So, entering Oliver's small rowboat, we paddled a short way out on the lake. Fishing was very good as we caught various species of nice trout. "I guess we better go in and let Blaine come out here," Lowell remarked.

We all agreed to this and so to the shore we paddled. Here I stepped from the boat and invited Blaine to take my place. He observed our good catch and then quickly exchanged places with me.

"Hey, you guys, wait a minute. I want you to drag my baited line out as far as you can."

"O.K. but hurry it up," Lowell added.

I applied several salmon eggs and worms to some bait hooks and then handed them to Blaine.

They pulled this to the end of the line and then let the baited hooks drop to the bottom.

I set my fishing pole down upon a small rock and sat down to await developments. I didn't wait long. I was soon reeling in a beautiful German brown trout. After catching it I rebaited and then cast out as far as I could. Soon, again, I was reeling in another prize. This was repeated several times as I intermittently added more worms and salmon eggs.

I was entirely engrossed in this fun when I heard a, "How are you doin?"

Somewhat surprised, I replied, "Oh, great. Look at these. Aren't they dandees?"

"They surely are, but what are you catching them on?"

Unhesitatingly, I answered, "Bait — worms and eggs."

"Hmm, eggs you say? he said, more as a statement than a question.

"Yea, those salmon eggs are super," I answered.

"Are those guys in that boat with you?"

"Yes, they surely are."

Well, you better call them in," he firmly remarked.

"Oh, they'll be in soon," I added.

"I mean now! Call then in!"

I became somewhat irritated by this insistence and I turned and countered, "I told you they will be in soon, so why should I call them now?"

"Do as I say. I AM A GAME WARDEN!"

I sprang to attention as he displayed his official badge. Then, more respectfully, I said, "But, why? We've done nothing wrong."

"Yes you have; you're breaking the law because you're using salmon eggs."

"I didn't see anything on my license prohibiting such," I confidently replied as I unfolded my license.

"It's right there," he said as he pointed to the top of my license.

There in big red letters was written. "THE USE OF SALMON EGGS PROHIBITED IN MONTANA."

I weakly called the others to shore. Salmon eggs were scattered over the bottom of the boat. Our cost: $27.50 each. The lesson: It pays to read the LARGE print as well as the fine print.

We did keep our fish, however.

Rats, Rats, Rats

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 123)

I had trapped muskrats for some time. I knew where to find them in the area surrounding the ranch. During late fall and early spring the pelts were prime and the sale of such provided a little extra money for our needs.

One season [my brother] Wayne and I joined forces and decided to trap in the Island Park country. It was about thirty miles north and east of us along the Snake River. He and I would usually leave our wives at home and then would travel each day to the trapping area to check on our sets.

We would travel to the Island Park bridge and then separate — one going up river and the other going down. Each of us would check on about fifty traps. We would carry a sack to put our catches in. It was not unusual for us to bring twenty to twenty-five muskrats back to the car where we skinned them. Often a mink became a welcome prize also. I even caught a large Canada goose which I carried under my arm for some time, then becoming weary carrying it and also feeling sorry for it, I turned it loose. It had been caught in the muskrat trap but was unharmed.

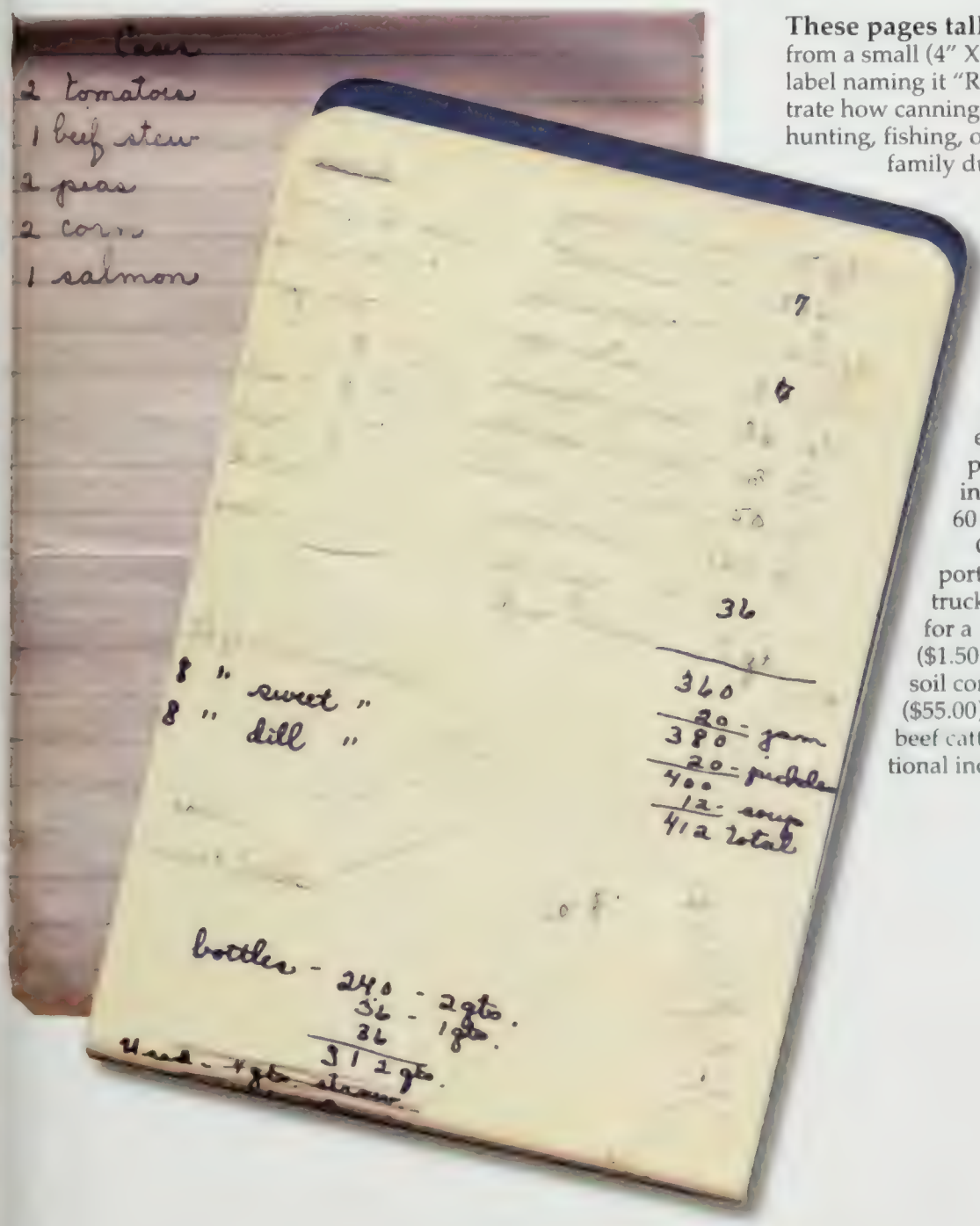
This activity continued for several days until cold weather produced severe ice conditions which prevented effective trapping.

The money received therefrom was appreciated but the outdoors feeling of exhilaration was most appreciated. On many of these trips we would see other wildlife such as moose, elk, deer, beaver, swans and coyotes.



Muskrats usually live in or near water. They are referred to as "rats" in a general sense because they are medium-sized rodents. The muskrat's name comes from scent glands near the tail which give off a strong musky odor when used to mark territory.[3]

Dad's 1943 ranch log (see p. 169) indicates he sold enough muskrat hides during a 10 day period to earn $71.50! In fact, killing and skinning muskrats was his only source of income in April that year!



These pages tallying Mom's food preservation were scanned from a small (4" X 6"), blue, spiral notebook with a white, sticky label naming it "Ranch income & expenses in 1939." They help illustrate how canning fruit, garden produce, and meat supplied by deer hunting, fishing, or slaughtering livestock sustained the Versal Davis family during the ranch years. Grocery bills were extremely low compared to today's standards.

The log also provides evidence that during this fourth year of their marriage, while living on the farm, Dad and Mom got by on as little as $28.55 a month. In March 1939 their ranch log reveals they subsisted on Dad's income from building a trailer ($5.50), bartering extra eggs ($4.90) and cream ($4.00) for groceries and dry-goods at a store in town, and the sale of 29 chickens ($5.00). The following month egg and cream production increased bringing in $30.15, their only income — except for the sale of one muskrat hide for 60 cents!

Other odd jobs Dad performed in 1939 to help support the family included overhauling a neighbor's truck ($12.00), working in the beets ($20.00), car work for a friend ($4.00), and "pulling a guy out of the mud" ($1.50). His most lucrative income sources, though, were soil conservation checks from the government in August ($55.00) and November ($43.00) and the occasional sale of beef cattle or horses (12 head at about $25.00 each). Additional income came from logging.[4]

The Idaho Potato

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 111)

The Idaho spud has long been famous as a food item. I helped my dad raise these tubers on the ranches he owned. However, our land was not very well suited for potato growth so dad never followed the profession very far.

But [my brother] Floyd married Carrie Crapo, who lived at Parker on Egin Bench land. This country was ideally suited for raising potatoes. She had four brothers who worked together and formed a dynasty in the raising of spuds. I, of course, became associated with them and worked for and with them.

I obtained a 1935 Ford truck, which I used on the ranch a great deal. I also used it to haul saw logs to Floyd's sawmill in Parker.

I was asked one harvest season, in the fall, if I would consider hauling sacked potatoes from the potato sorter to the railroad siding. We agreed upon a price of $3.00 per hour. I was to furnish my truck with gas. I was to assist loading the 100-pound sacks onto the vehicle then drive a short distance to the railroad siding, then carry the potatoes from the truck to the inside of a freight car.

This was exceedingly laborious work and usually continued for about six weeks. I was expected to spend ten hours each day hauling potatoes. I look back now and wonder how I managed. I had to handle my affairs on the ranch in addition to this side job. This involved milking about twenty head of cows night and morning. Also, there were myriad other matters to take care of such as irrigating, tending chickens, looking after dry stock, etc.

During the potato harvest, daylight would find me up and doing chores, then a hasty breakfast and a hurried drive to Parker. There I worked the ten hours, then hurried home, where I again did the necessary chores prior to supper. Finally, I would go to bed at about 10 p.m.

One year I decided on making an experiment. I, at the start of the potato harvest season, weighed myself. Then, at the conclusion of the rigorous six weeks, I again weighed. I expected to have lost several pounds of weight but, instead, I actually gained ten pounds of solid muscle. I was in perfect health and with absolutely no excess fat.

I did this sort of work for several years. I must give Thelma credit for helping me during those demanding weeks. She looked after many of the details at home. She also assumed the major care of our young sons. I'm sure I could never have done what I did without her help.





Photo courtesy Dean Davis

Potato harvesting crew, ca. 1945: Kneeling left front: Dean Davis, unidentified Mexican boy, Clayton Rich, unidentified young woman. Standing from left to right: Charles Davenport, Eva Warnburg, Helen Ferney, Fred Crapo, Mexican worker, Versal Davis, Marion Stoddard, and Harold Farley. The boy in the cab of the truck is unidentified. (Photo ID by Dean Davis.)

Opposite page: **Harvested potatoes in Farrell Wright's field** south of St. Anthony. Farrell was married to Bernice Olsen, Dad's niece (Merlie's daughter), 1940s.

Saved by a Bolt

(Flasback)

Thelma, I need to lubricate the pulley on the end of the boom pole," I said, as I gazed upwards a distance of 52 feet.

"Well, Dork, how are you going to get up there? You aren't a bird you know."

"If you will promise me that you will be careful, I will ride the Jackson fork up there as you pull it up to the end of the pole," I said somewhat imploringly.

"Well, if you trust me that much, I will do as you ask," she replied with an unnoticed twinkle in her eye.

So, somewhat apprehensively, I procured the necessary oil can and attached the three-eights-inch, steel, derrick cable to the hitch mounted on our '29 Chevy cabriolet.

With a silent prayer in my heart I motioned that I was ready as I sat in the framework of the 4-tined stacking fork.

She very carefully proceeded to pull until I was free of the ground. But then — I suppose she felt I was ready for a thrill — [there was a] quick surge forward of the car and I was raised rapidly toward my goal near the end of the upward-reaching pole.

Near this point I realized I would be [at the top] sooner than wise, so I yelled, "Stop!!" The fork and I came to a sudden, jolting halt. I was hanging on for dear life as the little car and its prankster pilot also came to an abrupt stop.

After some unsavory exclamations (from me), I finally generated enough nerve to oil the pulley after which I motioned for a slow, safe descent. Thelma carefully backed the vehicle until I was again, thankfully, on the solid ground.

I walked over to "chew her out, when I noticed something which gave me chills all over again — the hitch mounted on the rear bumper had pulled away until only one crooked and weakened bolt prevented the complete separation of the cable from the car!!!

Needless to say, Thelma was a pretty attentive wife for some time.

Some of the Best

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 129)

I've always been fortunate, by plan or otherwise, to have some good horses as draft animals or for riding. Dad used to keep about eight to ten draft horses at a time. By doing this two, four-horse spans could be utilized to pull a gang plow, a disc harrow, a grain binder, or any other piece of equipment requiring four animals or more for power. These animals were closely matched for size, speed and strength.
Before Dad passed away I became very familiar with the horses. After his death I then had complete charge of them.

I trained the animals to respond without the use of a whip. In fact, I was also able to lead one animal to an assigned position and it's mate would voluntarily assume its position beside the other.

It became my responsibility to break new animals to use in the harness. This was done usually in the wintertime when more control could be held over the new draft horse. A common bobsleigh was used in an open field where direction was not important. A trusty [older horse] was used with the [inexperienced] colt. The new animal was snubbed closely to the old one at its side. The two animals were hooked to the sleigh then were driven as best could be. This, sometimes, was hilarious as the new member had to be taught starting, stopping, to go left, to go right, to walk, to trot and to stand idle. It was amazing how quickly these horses learned these things. After four or five lessons one could control them reasonably well. After continued use they became very dependable.



"Old Buck was quite a horse," Dad wrote when labeling this photo. "I kept him for many years. Old Buck was one of my choice draft horses. Thelma drove a team (Buck and Tess) many times while mowing alfalfa." Photo ca. 1945.

Some of the better animals were named: Rock and Nig, Buck and Tess, Dan and Bolly, Queen and Flossie, Babe and Flora.

Suitable harnesses were provided for all the work animals. These were practical leather arrangements which had to be oiled and kept in good repair. The heavy horse collar was custom-fitted for each animal and could not be exchanged very well.

Taking care of the teams was time consuming requiring feeding of each, watering, cleaning the stalls, brushing the animals, harnessing, and unharnessing. So the actual time one used the horses was, of course, minimized. However, eight to ten hour days were common. During spring preparation and planting of crops, the steady horse-use could be six to eight weeks. The harvest in the fall, would require similar time. Haying, in between, was of equally long duration. Winter was the only resting period for the animals when only one team would be required occasionally.

Other horses were of the riding type. Because Dad was water master of the Dewey Canal, he was required to ride in the saddle a great deal. I also kept at least one good saddle horse to wrangle cattle. I purchased a custom-made saddle, which I treasured for many years. At one time I owned two fine animals, which Thelma and I rode frequently as a twosome. It was great fun to ride eight to ten miles as we drove cattle or inspected fence lines. Also we made many trips up and down the Dewey Canal while I was [also] watermaster. These animals, and the labors performed by them, will never be forgotten.

Thelma Enjoyed It, Anyway

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 115)

My mount, Old Jip, was tired and breathing heavily. I was angry and somewhat impatient. The lone yearling steer (a male just over one year old) had eluded me several times as I had tried to drive it within the pole corral. Finally, I went to the horse barn, took the lariat from the wall and remounted Old Jip. Then I rode at a mad gallop into the pasture and across a wide swamp area after this elusive steer.

But this time I did not try to drive it back to the corral. Instead, I simply chased the animal until I was close enough to throw a loop around its neck. Luckily, I soon had the tiring steer under control as it was held by the rope, which was secured to the saddle horn. I was then able to drive the tethered animal back toward the corral. I was now in control — or so I thought.

Thelma was near the corral where she waited to assist in guiding the steer into the enclosure.

All was going well as I drove the animal into the swamp where water was about two feet deep.

I cast a glance toward Thelma and said, "You'd better circle this way a bit so you can help more."

"You mean I'm to go up that-a-way?" she asked while pointing north.

"Yea, that's right," I replied.

During the conversation the steer had crossed the swamp and was on dry ground. I was, of course, still on my horse as we splashed in the deeper water in the middle of the pond.

Then it happened — the steer, upon seeing Thelma nearby, bolted back into the water and ran at a right angle to me. My disregard for roping methods soon proved my defeat. As the steer tightened the rope to my right, Old Jip leaned instinctively in the opposite direction.

Now this was well and good except I should have realized that the preceding running game had loosened the cinch of the saddle.

This oversight was quickly brought to my attention as I rode the saddle in a ninety degree arc as it was pulled to the horse's side. Where did I go? Without any ceremony I fell head-first into the swampy water.

Struggling to regain my feet and my composure I heard something which made me furious at first and then somewhat elated [as I, too, realized the humor in

the situation]. Thelma was near the edge of the water doubled over in very audible laughter. She was trying to say something to me but because of her mirth was unable to be coherent.

Needless to say, the steer went his merry way, probably laughing also.

Rope

(Thelma's version of Versal's steer-roping story titled "Thelma Enjoyed It, Anyway.")

The steer lowered its black head and charged in the other direction. Old Gyp was ready, her weight settled back on her haunches, and when the bewildered steer hit the end of the lasso, it flipped off its feet to its side with a thud like a dropped water-

Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson



melon. But the steer was only down for a moment; it scrambled to its feet with a grunting snort and ran again, this time into the slough. Gyp wisely turned, automatically, to face the running animal and again braced herself. Again the steer was thrown by its own velocity when it hit the end of the slack. Slime flew and a green-dripping monster emerged blowing and snorting. It stopped.

Dork chuckled as he turned Old Gyp toward the barns. "Ya'll learn ta lead or break yer neck."

He spurred Gyp to cross the slough, but when the dripping steer felt the rope tighten, it bolted again. Mid-slough, the alert Gyp tried to turn, but she slipped. This time when the steer hit the end of the rope Gyp was broadside to it; the saddle slipped on Gyp's perspiration-wet hide and the swearing, clutching Dork found himself making a sudden, sure arch down into the muck.

For a few moments there were cursing slime, a threshing steer, a scrambling horse; then the freed steer ran plowing green foam, the rope like a long, slimy snake slithering after it.

Later a dry but far from docile Dork stalked towards the barns curtly demanding, "C'm 'n help me catch that d____ black _____ _____. He's at the barn now."

Ruefully I followed him; well I knew the storm signals.

Dork walked among the cows and picked up the end of the long rope as the little black steer skittered among his gentler kind. Dork ran to the fence and snubbed the rope around a post. The cows scattered as the steer bucked and bellowed when he felt the taut rope.

As the steer charged, Dork yelled, "Open the gate!" I did. The black steer, with his stubby two-inch horns protruding, dashed through as I shinnied up the fence. Dork came galloping after him as the lasso pulled him along; then Dork squatted down, plowing twin furrows with his heels and the straining steer was dragged to a stop.

The wiry creature turned, shook its head, blew, and positioning those two-inch weapons, charged directly at the still-squatting man.

"Dork!" I shrieked as I realized the black demon's intent. Dork clutched his boot-clad legs and rolled like a curled caterpillar when the steer hit him, but he also clung to that rope. The steer dashed on and again Dork plowed him to a stop. Again the enraged animal turned and charged the equally enraged man. Again the man was bowled.

"Let him go, you fool, let him go! I yelled.

But the man sprang to a nearby logging truck and snubbed the rope around a stake. The stake snapped and Dork lunged after the fleeing rope. The steer was again dragged to a stop, but turned eagerly to assault his tormentor. This time the jaw-set Dork prepared to dog the blowing black demon. He lunged, but couldn't get a grip on the stubby horns. He was knocked aside.

The contestants were now in range of my clotheslines and the stubborn man alertly wrapped the rope around the clothesline pole. The steer was abruptly yanked to a halt. Blowing and snorting, pawing, shaking its midnight head, it displayed all the possibilities of its uncastrated gladiator cousins. Again and again Dork was forced to duck behind the pole as the delightedly-enraged animal charged.

Suddenly the ancient pole snapped and Dork was again forced to lunge for the fleeing rope. He missed it and lay white with anger and dust as the steer crashed through the garden fence, kicked up his heels and disappeared in the willows along the canal. The rope skipped gaily after it.

TWILA'S NOTE: Mom wrote this for English 117-A at Utah State University when she returned to college to obtain her bachelor's degree in the late 1960s. She often used real-life experiences when fulfilling class writing assignments. Her professor gave her an A- on this one, along with the written comment, "A superb piece of action description!"



The Versal and Thelma Davis family and Brownie, 1945
LaVel (7), Brent (6), and Brian (2).

Chapter Five

The War Years

1941-1947

I suppose if I were to name the most sobering and demanding time of my life, I would have to select the World War II years. Those were tense, worrisome, and difficult times fraught with terror, restrictions, work demands, and patriotic response. Newspapers and radio disclosed the terrifying details of military action on two fronts. The loss of human life was reported daily.

Thelma and I were married in 1937 [before the beginning of World War II but] at a time when Germany was asserting her great strength. World peace was being threatened and people of the earth were wondering what might happen. We two, as newly-weds, assumed the main task of running and operating the two ranches — the home ranch and the upper farm. Dad was seventy-years-old and was not able to do heavy physical work. He assisted with lighter tasks but the main operation and harder physical labor was left on my shoulders. I did not mind this as I was in perfect health and I had a lifetime ahead of me.[1]



A Davis family get-together in Parker, Idaho, photo taken near the time America entered the war, Dec. 1941.

Adults left to right: Gould Davis, Bernice Olsen Wright, Agnes Olsen (Albert Olsen's wife), Farrell Wright (with hat in back), Alice Davis, Warren Caplinger (with his arm around Alice & Merlie), Henry Olsen (with farmer's tan in back), Merlie Davis Olsen (shading her face), and an unknown woman. The children are unidentified. Versal and Thelma were not present on this occasion.

December 7, 1941!

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 34)

Thelma, how would you like to visit Bernice and Farrell this evening?" I asked as I hung up my coat after having completed the evening chores.

Soon we were riding, with our two young sons, toward St. Anthony and two miles beyond, where the Wrights lived. We had done this often as we spent many evenings together playing cards or just visiting.



Often we were joined by the Austin and Rula Price family or perhaps the Wendell and Fern Virgins. But this evening we were alone. It was Sunday and earlier in the day we had attended church services.

I drove our '34 model Chevrolet to the rural homestead and stopped in front of the picket gate. We casually walked to the front door, opened it, and simply went in.

"Well, it looks like you expect to make yourselves at home and I guess you may as well," Bernice offered as we walked in.

Farrell had just come in from the cold outside where he had just taken care of the few dry-stock he had.

We talked of various common matters of note as we moved freely around. We had been there about one hour when Farrell walked over to his Montgomery Ward cabinet radio and switched on the program. Ordinary music emanated with the usual audio voice remarks.

Then it happened — loudly and very clearly — a news release, a special one stating that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by Japanese aircraft!

All of us looked at each other without saying anything; we were shocked!!

Then Farrell did something that I had never heard him do before. He swore!! Swearing was not unusual with many of us but this was the first and only time I have actually heard this mild-mannered man use profanity.

Very effectively, but simply, he said. "Why those little yellow bastards!!!"

Thus the Pacific conflict became news to us. It caused deep thought as we partially realized the terrible circumstances, which would inevitably follow.

As I write this many years later, in 1983, I still remember the incident and the shock that terrified our hearts. The following years brought trauma and heartache. But our nation rallied to the cause and, after a few years of dedicated effort, victory came.

Most ordinary happenings are quickly forgotten but that short, dramatic radio news item issued on that eventful evening remains vibrant within my memory.

Davis Family members gathered to honor Gould and Alice's 50 years of marriage, 25 Dec. 1941.

Despite ominous events developing worldwide (U.S. declarations of war against Japan, Germany and Italy two weeks earlier), several generations of Davises celebrated Grandpa and Grandma Davis' golden wedding anniversary on Christmas Day, 1941, at the Davis ranch. Six of their seven living children and their families were present at the family party, which was held a month ahead of the couple's official 50th anniversary date, 22 Jan.1942.

In the above photo are (left to right): Versal Davis, Carrie Crapo Davis (Floyd's wife), Thelma Hall Davis (Versal's wife), Bert Loveland, Vera Davis Loveland, Leatha Davis McFarland (holding the large oval picture), Frank McFarland, Floyd Davis, Myrtle Potter Davis (Wayne's wife), Wayne (Pat) Davis, Merlie Davis Olsen, Alice McDaniel Davis, Henry Olsen and John Gould Davis. Warren Davis, Gould and Alice's oldest son, lived in New York and was unable to attend the family gathering. His image is in the framed portrait held by Leatha.

At this time Grandpa and Grandma Davis' direct descendants included eight children, 30 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

Gould died of a heart attack on 25 March 1942, three months after this Christmas day celebration.



Alice and Gould pose with their 3-tiered anniversary cake decorated with 50 candles and topped with a miniature bride and groom, 25 Dec. 1941.

A local newspaper, in an article about the golden wedding celebration, reported: *"Mr. and Mrs. Davis have been active in community development, serving on many public and civic boards. They are lifelong members of the L.D.S. church wherein they have served fairthfully and long in various capacities. They are neighborly and cordial, fully embued with every fine quality of good citizenship."*

Gould and Alice's friends from the Yellowstone Stake Genealogical Committee, on which they both served, also sponsored a celebration on a later date.



John Gould Davis died unexpectedly of a heart attack on 25 March 1942. He was 75. Of his father's sudden death, Versal wrote:

Dad and she [his mother, Alice] *had packed their suitcases and started to make another annual trip to the St. George Temple. It was early spring and things at the ranch were being taken care of in the usual order. However, Dad had said that he did not feel too well, and so decided to see Doctor Ellison, prior to leaving town. This appointment was met as he and Mother traversed through part of St. Anthony on their way to Utah. Doctor Ellison took some tests and advised Dad that it would be better if he entered the hospital for an extended check-up. This was agreed upon and Mother returned to the ranch, hoping to join Dad in a day or so as they resumed their journey. Dad seemed to be doing alright and therefore, Mother was not with him at the time of his sudden and fatal heart seizure. . . . Too suddenly the mortal existence of this dear husband and father had come to an end. But his love, kindness, honesty, and many other attributes are well remembered and revered.*[4]



In a photo taken after Gould's death, Charlotte Alice Davis is shown sitting on the double headstone marking her husband's grave in St. Anthony's Riverview Cemetery.

Of her husband's burial Alice wrote: *Respect was shown to him and family in many ways and by all concerned. He was laid to rest in the St. Anthony cemetery March 29th 1942. He at this time and years before was chairman of the cemetery [board]. He was buried in one of the best lots in the cemetery. The deed was signed in his own handwriting."* [5]

A Tribute to Thelma

(Flashback)

In 1942, Dad passed away and I was then left in full charge of ranching operations. Help was becoming very hard to acquire so it became expedient for me to arrange things so that a minimum of labor would be needed. I did very little rotating of crops, leaving most of the tillable land in hay. I pastured some marginal areas and let some lie idle.

After Pearl Harbor, in December of 1941, I had to enlist the help of Thelma. She, by this time, was busy caring for our two sons, but yet she happily assisted in doing all she could. During the hay harvesting season she was needed most. Time after time she rode a horse-drawn mowing machine, while a baby (Brent, or later, Brian) was wrapped in blankets and placed in a convenient spot on a ditch bank. This required a great deal of two-way attention yet she managed.

After the hours and hours of mowing then I would do the bunch-raking and piling of the hay. Then the new hay was loaded by hand (mine) onto hayracks mounted on a truck and trailer. I then hauled it to the home ranch where she and I unloaded and stacked it creating large supplies of hay for winter use.

This process was repeated several times as the war years continued. I was and am proud of Thelma's dedication during this pressing time. I could not have managed without her help. To think that during all this she was also giving birth to children and then providing for their care!! It seems incredulous!

I, of course, had a myriad other duties such as choring night and morning, taking care of draft horses, irrigating, fencing and fulfilling my duty as water master of the Dewey Canal Co. On top of this I had become active in scouting and, thereby, was required to spend many hours in church-related activity. I was required to spend five days at summer camp during which time Thelma took charge at the ranch doing the chores, even some irrigating. She was alone with the boys during this period.

One of the factors which made this all possible was that we both enjoyed perfect health. It seemed that the long hours of toil just increased our ability to do even more. It now seems amazing.

I would be very ungrateful if I did not mention how my mother also helped. For two or three years after Dad passed away she remained on the ranch also



Mom and newly toothless, six-year-old LaVel standing near the Davis ranch home in July 1944.

She did what she could as she tended to lighter tasks around the home and farmyard. She also tended LaVel a great deal, which, of course helped Thelma.

Those years were exceedingly difficult but I learned a great deal during that time. I truly learned the dignity of work, the appreciation of help from others, and the knowledge that we all were contributing to the war effort. Patriotism was a living, vibrant force which bound all citizens together in a common cause.



Dad and Mom and some of their friends — all young farm couples — posed for this photograph on a Sunday afternoon outing just north of St. Anthony on the banks of the Henry's Fork of the Snake River, July 1942. They are L-R: Eileen & Reed Birch, Versal and Thelma Davis, Jess Birch with his arm around his sister-in-law, Elina Clark (Jess' wife, Myrdean, took the photo), and Bernice and Farrell Wright.

Most of these young farmers' selective service classifications were 2-C, giving them a temporary deferment from military service because of their farmer/rancher status. The government needed these men to continue and increase farm production as their part of the war effort. Of this World War II era, Versal wrote: *"Even though our lives were filled with work during World War II, yet we managed to balance our existence with other more enjoyable things. Thelma and I did some fishing, swimming in the nearby canal or river, and took part in church activities. We were able to also meet with other young couples in evenings of social fun."*[6]

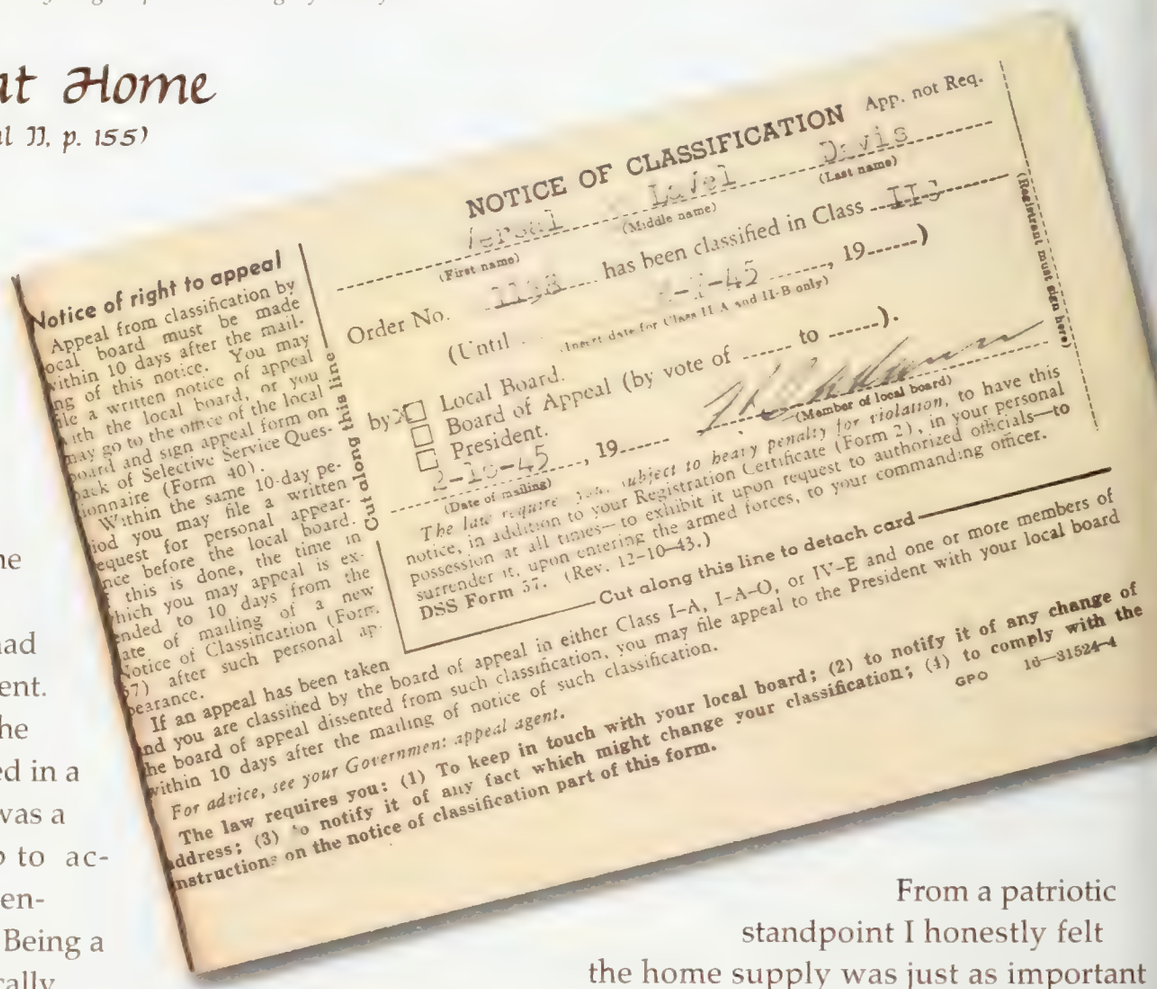
Serving at Home

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 155)

In 1939, Germany invaded France and other nearby countries. This caused great concern because of the very possible involvement of other powers. The draft system of the U.S. was activated and a stream of young men began to bolster the military forces of our nation.

At this time Thelma and I had two young sons, LaVel and Brent. I was required to register for the draft, which I did. I was placed in a classification called 3C. This was a temporary deferment group to accommodate those who were engaged in strategic positions. Being a lone farmer-rancher automatically placed me in that classification.

I want anybody who reads this to know that I did not ask that I be placed in any deferment status. I did not wish to enlist but if I had been conscripted I would not have contested the action.



NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION App. not Req.

LaVel Davis
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Order No. 1198 has been classified in Class 1-A

(Until ... (Insert date for Class II-A and II-B only))

by ☐ Local Board.
☐ Board of Appeal (by vote of ... to ...).
☐ President.

2-10-45, 19...
(Date of mailing)

(Member of local board)

(Registrant must sign here)

The late registrant is subject to heavy penalty for violation, to have this notice, in addition to your Registration Certificate (Form 2), in your personal possession at all times—to exhibit it upon request to authorized officials—to surrender it, upon entering the armed forces, to your commanding officer.

DSS Form 57. (Rev. 12-10-43.)

Cut along this line to detach card

Notice of right to appeal

Appeal from classification by local board must be made within 10 days after the mailing of this notice. You may file a written notice of appeal with the local board, or you may go to the office of the local board and sign appeal form on back of Selective Service Questionnaire (Form 40). Within the same 10-day period you may file a written request for personal appearance before the local board. If this is done, the time in which you may appeal is extended to 10 days from the date of mailing of a new Notice of Classification (Form 57) after such personal appearance.

Cut along this line

If an appeal has been taken and you are classified by the board of appeal in either Class I-A, I-A-O, or IV-E and one or more members of the board of appeal dissented from such classification, you may file appeal to the President with your local board within 10 days after the mailing of notice of such classification.

For advice, see your Government appeal agent.

The law requires you: (1) To keep in touch with your local board; (2) to notify it of any change of address; (3) to notify it of any fact which might change your classification; (4) to comply with the instructions on the notice of classification part of this form.

GPO 16—31524-4

From a patriotic standpoint I honestly felt the home supply was just as important as actual confrontation in war. I should add also that, as the war progressed, I was moved from 3C to 2C and at the close of the conflict I was about to become 1A. This last classification would have moved me from the ranch to the battle line.[5]





Versal, Thelma, and sons, LaVel (3½) and Brent (1½) on the side steps leading to their two-room apartment in the Davis ranch home, July 1941. The boys are about to go "swimming" in the nearby ditch, a carefree summer pastime. Five months later the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor required that everyone assist in the war effort in some way. Youngsters like Brent and LaVel, shouldered farm responsibilities much earlier than they would have otherwise to fill in for farm workers away at war. When they were grown both LaVel and Brent, as well as younger brother, Brian (born in 1943), served in the Armed Forces — LaVel in the Air Force, Brent & Brian in the Army

Pint-Sized War Efforts

(Flashback, Journal IV, p. 155 & Journal II, p. 126)

Well, my dear, I have decided to try out what you and I were talking about last evening," I said to Thelma as I entered the house after having completed the regular morning barnyard chores.

"You mean about LaVel and Brent?" she replied.

"That's right, I'm going to give it a try," I answered back.

"Well, Dork, you need the help and I'm sure the boys will try to do what you ask of them. You bribe them by telling them that I will prepare a special dinner if they respond okay."

This concluding remark by Mom put action into high gear as I proceeded to implement plans to use these two boys in assisting me in harvesting the hay that was needed to feed the cows, dry cattle, and horses during the long winter months ahead.

This episode took place during the concluding years of World War II when LaVel was only six or seven years of age and Brent two years younger.

Hired labor was difficult to obtain, therefore, the physical needs of operating the ranch had to be satisfied by extensive effort from Thelma and me. She had assisted me in many, many ways, which I have recorded in other flashbacks. But more help was needed so I elected to utilize the questionable, untried talents the boys hopefully had.

I had previously cut, raked, and bunched the alfalfa into organized rows so that I could easily drive my truck and four-wheeled trailer between. Then I could physically fork each pile of hay and place it upon either the flat rack on the back of the '35 Ford truck or on the four-wheeled hayrack, towed behind the truck. My biggest problem was that I had to enter into the truck, drive it forward, then stop, get out, and load more hay. This [stop-and-go process] was a time-consuming effort thus the purpose of using these two young boys.

I meticulously showed Brent and LaVel how to operate the simple controls of the truck in the lowest gear. It was my purpose to then load the hay while one of the boys slowly drove the truck straight ahead.

I first placed LaVel in the driver's seat and instructed Brent to help LaVel in any way that seemed necessary. The truck was pointed in a straight line between [parallel] rows of hay. All that was necessary was to drive directly ahead.

Well, this appeared simple and easy to me, but the boys were faced with a major new experience in life and both of them were very quiet and wide-eyed. I'm sure each of them was thinking about the new task

Versal gives his young sons, LaVel (left) and Brent (right) instructions, while working on the ranch, March 1944.

The boys are inside Versal's farm truck, a vehicle which Brent innocently vandalized. He recorded the incident in his autobiography: *"My Dad acquired an old truck from somewhere. I think it was green. Anyway, I spent one afternoon with one of his hammers meticulously knocking out every light on the truck. Don't forget, most of them were just about at eye level for a little kid with a hammer. I carefully walked around the truck and systematically got every one of them! I probably got spanked for that, but I can't remember. I'm sure it was pretty hard on my parents, not for my bad behavior, but because they had very little money to replace the lights."*[7]



before them — to drive a truck and trailer!!

After starting the engine I then told Vel to depress the clutch. This required the strength of both his feet as he slid down from the seat. From this position he could just barely see between the lower spokes of the steering wheel. However, he was able to lift himself back upon the seat after he somewhat jerkily released the clutch pedal. I had previously set the idle speed to best propel the truck and had placed the transmission lever in lowest position. The truck [pulling the hayrack] then moved slowly forward and I hurriedly loaded the nearby piles of hay.

"Hey, turn this way a bit. You're running over some piles," I cautioned LaVel.

LaVel turned the steering wheel in the proper direction but over-corrected and was now running over piles of hay on the opposite side. I ran to the cab, corrected the alignment, then rather impatiently said, "Now guide this thing so the radiator cap goes right between those piles up there."

LaVel grinned as he felt the truck respond to his will. Brent was watching closely so he would not need all the prompting LaVel was getting.

LaVel soon became capable of piloting the truck at low continuous speed. In fact, he became quite pleased with himself and was triumphantly grinning from ear to ear. When I asked him to stop and trade places with Brent he said, "But I can do it. Brent doesn't know how."

"Well, we'll soon find out, so move over."

Brent was even shorter than LaVel. I almost cried when I observed him as he slid down from the seat to depress the clutch. But he, like LaVel, climbed back upon the seat after having released the clutch pedal. He could not see above the steering wheel to the field ahead, however this did not stop him. You see, LaVel helped him to turn the wheel in the proper direction as the truck rolled relentlessly along.

This was a wonderful trial and training period for two very young and eager boys as they were initiated into a future filled with ever new and developing power advancements. It also helped me a great deal as I was able to maintain a steady pace while forking the hay upon the outfits. They assisted me in doing what was necessary to fulfill our part in aiding the war effort.

World War II Restrictions

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 168)

The war effort demanded a just sacrifice from those of us who remained at home. It was our duty to produce and supply. To do this we had to forsake the use or consumption of many things which normally would be readily available.

Rationing became common. Much of this was done on a personal basis but most became federal law and demanded compliance.

It became common to accept rationing of tires for automobiles and trucks. Inferior, synthetic imitations were provided instead of the genuine rubber ones we were used to prior to the war. Gasoline became a precious fluid as it was allocated according to need. Gas stamps were issued according to priority: A (very restricted), B (medium need), and C (preferential for urgent use). As a farmer I was issued gas stamps in the B group. This demanded cautious and careful use of the allotment.



This government poster was widely distributed to encourage farmers to save and donate scrap metal, tin, rubber and other materials for the war effort. Even young children were asked to sacrifice by turning in some of their toy planes, cars and comic books for recycling into war supplies.

Various foods became subjected to restrictive use. Sugar became a real luxury. Even bread was used in conservative amounts. Real black pepper was no longer available on the open market. Many other spices became non-essentials. Because of restricted transportation, several fruits and vegetables were no longer readily available. Butter and cheese were rationed along with many, many common staples.

Candy was almost a non-existent item. Pop and

sugar mixed drinks were not available. Honey was not readily available, but a man by the name of Mr. Gibson owned some beehives, which were resting on our property. We were, therefore, able to obtain fresh honey from him. This appreciative commodity became very precious as we substituted it for sugar.

Wearing apparel became more valuable as it also became more unavailable. Therefore, clothing was carefully taken care of and handed down from one to another. Shoes were restricted and could only be obtained by special need according to family size.

Hardware became one of the most controlled items. Metals were subjected to stiff allocation, an ongoing problem with farm equipment that required constant care and upkeep.

Even lubricants were hoarded carefully. All used oil and grease was saved for secondary use in or on various pieces of machinery. I recall how I loved to shoot my .22 rifle but it also became somewhat useless as I could buy only two boxes of cartridges per year. These were truly precious to me and I used them wisely and sparingly.

No new cars could be purchased. However, some that were two to four years old could be bought if a special need permit was obtained. I recall obtaining a 1942 Plymouth in this manner. It actually cost much more than a new one should have.

All of those restrictions plus many more had to be observed. But by so doing the populace who remained "at home" actually aided in obtaining victory.



Thelma and her one-month-old son, Brian J Davis, June 1943. Years later Mom wrote why Brian was given only the letter "J" as a middle name during his emergency priesthood blessing: *"Because Versal and I hadn't quite decided on a middle name for this 3rd son— we'd considered his grandfathers' names, John or Jick — I asked that he be named Brian J [in honor of both]."*[8] (Mom's account of Brian's blessing is in Chapter Notes #8.) In her notation for this photo, Mom wrote the dress she wore was a green print skirt with a plain, green top.

Miracle Baby

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 87)

Thelma has never had a miscarriage. Her deliveries have been reasonably normal. However, when Brian was born, a condition arose, which was quite different.

Arrangements had been previously made for the birth to take place in a private nursing home. So, when the need was apparent, I took Thelma to this special home. The doctor was alerted, but he failed to arrive in time. So, I assisted the lady nurse in the delivery. All went quite well and after a short time, I bid Thelma goodbye and returned to the ranch to take care of my duties there.

While I was gone drama was taking place in the nursing home. Brian had developed great difficulty in breathing. The nurse had made use of oxygen to keep him alive. In final desperation she came to Thelma and told her that her new son was in very critical condition and would shortly die. She advised Thelma to have any last rites performed very soon.

Of course, Thelma instantly thought of administration. She asked the nurse to call me. Mrs. Howard, the nurse, said there was not time. Then Thelma told her to go next door and get Bert Loveland [Dad's brother-in-law, Vera's husband]. She did this and shortly Bert came with another man named Joe Heward. Together they anointed [Brian] and sealed

the anointing [with prayer].

[In the prayer] Brother Heward told Thelma that her son "would mature to manhood and that she was not to worry anymore about the matter." Immediately Brian recovered and became perfectly normal.

Mrs. Howard stated that the baby should be dead but that a miracle had taken place. She was amazed and awed. When such sudden change takes place one cannot refute the power of faith and prayer.

Brian grew to adulthood and is now the father of children of his own.

I'll be ever grateful to my brother-in-law, Bert Loveland, and his neighbor, Joe Heward.

Brent recalled being LaVel's "punky little brother" but took hope when Brian was born because he then moved up a notch and Brian became *his* "punky little brother."

Brent also wrote of conditions when the three boys were small:

We lived in a small ranch house under what I guess were some pretty primitive conditions (but no dirt floors). I still remember that we had to manually pump water up into the kitchen. . . . There was absolutely no plumbing in the house. I think we bathed about once a week, using buckets of water heated on the stove and poured into a big, round, galvanized bathtub. We all took turns except that LaVel always bathed before I did and I had to use his water afterwards. Worse yet, it was only lukewarm by then, and there was no lounging around in the bath tub. . . . I don't remember how Brian handled the already-used-bathwater problem. He probably complained about it a lot, as I did.

I still remember my mother proudly showing us a toilet paper holder, which she was saving for the day we could install an indoor bathroom. Nearly all rural families at that time had outhouses. Toilet paper consisted of old newspapers, Sears catalogs, and the like — whatever was handy"



"Here's how boys looked when Brian arrived, June 1943" — Thelma's notation for this photo in Brent's baby book. LaVel (5) is on the left, Brent (4) on the right

On the page describing his third birthday (21 Dec. 1942), she wrote a note, which explains the new Sunday duds: *"I was working at Penney's again this year during the Christmas rush. The boys went to Sunday School with their Daddy. When I got home they had been getting out their new duds but not quite all. We soon started to put away and tried on the boys' new shirts and ties (their first) which was Brent's birthday present. For a long time they had been wanting shirts with ties just like Daddy's. We also had all the candy we could eat. This is the beginning of the second year our nation has been at war and we are just beginning to feel the pinch of unavailable goods. Gas and tires are rationed. However we are living under the best possible conditions and Brent has a good chance of developing into a strong, normal, happy boy. He is certainly a good, healthy, mischievous little man."*

Farm Record Book entries for the year beginning Jan. 1, 1943

REAL ESTATE INVENTORY

Enter below the value of the farm if owned at the beginning of the year and again at the end. Space is provided for listing the various kinds of land and buildings separately if so desired. If all or part of the farm is rented, use the rental agreement section as the space below is only for the land owned by operator

Kinds of Land and Buildings	Acres	Beginning of Year Value	End of Year Value
Land			
Buildings			
Total farm value		$	$

RENTAL AGREEMENT

If all or part of farm is rented, write in below the acreage rented and the terms of the lease:

Cash Rent	acres	$
	acres	
	acres	

Acres rented on shares .....

Terms of lease

HORSES AND MULES

Enter below the number and value of horses and mules on hand at the beginning of the year and again at the end of year, the number that died during the year, and the number and value of those bought and sold.

Name or Work Horses	Beginning Inventory Value	End Inventory Value	Purchases Amount paid	Sales Amount received	Died Number
	Number at beginning	Number at end			
Colts					
All other					
Total horses and mules	$	$	$	$	

INVENTORY OF MACHINERY, EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES

Enter below the kind and value of all machinery, equipment, and miscellaneous supplies on hand at beginning of year, and again at end of year. List individually the more important tools such as tractors, trucks, automobiles, planters, binders, threshers, combines, ensilage cutters, etc. Some grouping will be necessary for plows, cultivators, haying equipment, special livestock equipment, and small tools. Also inventory such supplies as lime, fertilizer, spray materials, tile, twine, sacks, fencing, building materials, etc.

Item	Beginning of Year Value	End of Year Value	Item	Beginning of Year Value	End of Year Value

FARM EXPENSES

Enter below and on the next two pages all farm expenses and purchases (other than livestock) as they occur throughout the year. Livestock purchases should be entered on pages 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12, according to the type of livestock.

Date	Details of Transaction	Cost		Date	Details of Transaction	Cost	
Jan.	Feed	6	12				
" 12	Trip to town		70				
Feb. 28	seed		22				
Mar. 1	seed		24				
Mar. 16	co. License		5	—			
" 16	repair of tire (Lucas)		6	10			
" 16	Dr. Owen		12	—			
" 16	washing machine (Mrs.)		3	—			
Mar. 1	gas		11	76			
	Fuel pd. (Parrish)		31	18			
" 18	5 qts. seed		37	50			
" 18	expense bull paid		9	30			
Apr. 2	hay		39	20			
" 10	gas		11	20			
May 10	gas + oil		15				
" 10	salt		1	75			
" 1	vaccine + tax		1	75			
" 1	rope		1	—			
" 15	rope		1	05			
	gas + oil		14	10			
			21	—			
" 11	gas		10	35			
	gas + oil						
July 1	gas Dillman		10	—			
" 12	gas		12	—			
" 15	Make Gelt + pulley		4	—			
Total (column 1)		$	318	51	Total (column 2)	$	

FARM EXPENSES

(Continued from p. 5)

Date	Details of Transaction	Cost		Date	Details of Transaction	Cost	
	Income	$			Expenses	$	
	Cattle (Total)	5	83		Feed	533	93
	Hogs	23	51		Supplies	211	05
					Repairs	11	10
		232	34		Hay	131	30
	(Less Exp.)	149	86		Taxes	179	—
					Interest	24	—
	Net Profit	631	48		Trucks	58	50
					Depreciation	1	—
					Misc.	42	30
					Depreciation	2	—
						1424	71
					Total (column 6)	$	
					Total from column 5		
					Total from column 4		
					Total from column 3		
					Total from column 2		
					Total from column 1		
					Deductions (from milk or cream checks, p. 7)		
					Total farm expenses	$	
Total (column 5)		$			Operator's share (if different from total)	$	

OTHER FARM RECEIPTS

Enter below all other farm receipts for which space is not provided elsewhere, such as outside work with team, tractor, truck, or other machinery; woodlot products; gravel; miscellaneous livestock, etc.

Date	Item	Amount Received	Date	Item	Amount Received	
Jan. 6	Trucking	1		Hog manure	12	—
" 6	Wood sales	22		Trucking	11	—
Feb. 17	Cattle hiring	14	—	Trucking	2	—
Mar. 16	Truck & Tractor (Parish)	10	—	Trucking		
" 30	Truck hiring	2	60		4	20
Apr. 7	rats	3	—	Trucking	3	—
" 8	rats	9	—	"	35	03
" 9	rats	15	50	Tractor hiring	31	50
" 10	rats	9	—	Trucking	6	15
" 11	"	9	—	Trucking	22	8 —
" 12	"	7	—	"	60	—
" 13	"	8	—	"	20	—
" 14	"	5	—	Truck hauling	100	—
" 15	"	2	—	Total (column 2)	$	
" 16	"	4	—	Total from column 1	$	
				Total other receipts	$	
Total (column 1)		110	90	Operator's share (if different from total)	$	

NOTE AND MORTGAGE TRANSACTIONS

Enter below the money borrowed and the principal and interest payments made during the year on notes and mortgages in connection with the farm business of the operator.

Loans: Loan taken out	Amount of loan	Rate of interest	From whom borrowed	Date due	Loans paid: Date paid	To whom paid	Payments: Principal	Interest
Jan. 12	$ 125	—	[illegible]		[illegible]		$ [illegible]	$
"	75	—	[illegible]		[illegible]		[illegible]	
Mar. 16	150	—	[illegible]		[illegible]		[illegible]	
					[illegible]			
					[illegible]			
					[illegible]	

One Inch Deeper

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 58)

Floyd held one hand up signaling for me, as ratchet-setter, to continue moving the heavy cottonwood outward. I did so until his hand lowered abruptly. Then I watched as the log moved forward and the large circular saw cut along the side ripping a bark-covered slab from the log.

This cut-off section fell to the ground near the track of the mill. The carriage on which I was riding with the saw timber returned to its starting position. Again I observed Floyd's hand as he lifted one finger. This was the signal to force the log outward one inch. This I did and then he, as sawyer, pulled the forward speed lever. Again the saw bit into the log as a 'winny edge' board was being cut from it.

Then, about one-third the way along the cut a 'ping' was heard. This usually indicated that the saw had struck some foreign object in the log. After this cut was finished Floyd returned the carriage again to its starting position. There he stopped the engine and all moving parts came to a dead stop.

"Did you hear that noise?" he asked. "I sure did. Let's have a look," I answered.

We glanced up and down the length of the log and noticed nothing unusual.

"I'm sure there's something there, either in the log yet or in the piece we cut off," Floyd insisted. He examined the removed board and I searched the log again. Then, ever so small but glinting in the sunlight, I noticed something.

"Hey, I've found it," I exclaimed.

"Well, let's dig it out — it is probably a nail." We had discovered such as this before. These logs were from local farmyards and the presence of nails was not uncommon.

"OK, give me that ax there and I'll chop it out," I offered. I chopped away until a section, about four inches wide, came loose. I simply grasped it with my hands and pulled it away. A metal object clung to the piece. It was a tarnished 30-30 rifle cartridge!!

"Holy smoke, look what that saw ticked," I said as I handed it to Floyd.

"Gosh, Dark, I think we better dig deeper in that log." We did and dug out seven fully loaded cartridges. How did they get there? We figured they were probably deposited in a hollow pocket of the growing tree by a common pack rat. Then, as the tree grew, it enclosed the cache within itself.



Photo courtesy Floyd Dean Davis

Above: Floyd Davis' sawmill in Parker, Idaho. Versal assisted his brother with his lumber business for many years.

Below: Versal (right) and Floyd's son, Dean, with a load of lumber from Floyd's sawmill ready for delivery, 1943.



We had luckily just touched a single cartridge. This engagement was heard and so a safe removal of the hidden store was made.

I wonder what would have happened if I'd taken a two-inch cut instead of the one-inch!!

Brothers, Floyd and Versal, after a hot and dusty day cutting and loading sawlogs. These were delivered to Floyd's mill in Parker, Idaho, 1945.

Of logging, Dad wrote: *It involved tremendous physical effort but I hardly remember this as being difficult. It was a joy to work when health was supreme. I was fully functioning as an ox and as powerful as a steam locomotive!!*



I Didn't Even Miss It

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 42)

The weather was cold and frost was evident in shaded places. Floyd and I had left home early that morning and had each driven our logging trucks to the mountains to cut and load some dry-pine saw logs.

We had worked hard and had loaded his outfit and about half of mine. We had rolled the heavier logs up strong poles, which were placed at the side of the ever-rising loads. It was necessary to wear a jacket and also some cotton gloves to keep warm.

"Let's see if we can lift this smaller section," Floyd said as he pointed to a sixteen-foot tapered log resting on the ground beside the truck.

"Well, I'll take this heavy end if you lift the other. It will be faster than roiling it up the poles," I agreed. So he bent over in a lifting position and I did the same. We grasped the log and proceeded to lift.

"Wow! That's heavier than I thought," he remarked as he repositioned himself.

I maintained my position as he readjusted his then with all the strength we possessed we lifted the log to about knee-height. He was obviously having trouble holding up the lighter end of the timber. Then his hands slipped from beneath the log and his end crashed to the ground. This caused me to fall forward as I went down with my heavy end. The log and my gloved left hand struck the hard frozen ground.

"Ow!" I exclaimed as I drew my hand away. In pain I shook my injured fingers. With my shaking right

hand I removed the glove from the pain-ridden left member.

My index finger was very bloody and the end was obviously crushed.

"Boy, Kid, you got a good one there," Floyd sympathized.

"Yea, I guess so. Well, I'll wrap this bandana around it and then we'll finish loading."

So, with his help, we wrapped the swelling finger in a thick, awkward, dirty neckerchief. We finished loading, bound our loads, then drove thirty-five miles to his sawmill in Parker. There I quickly unloaded onto the log deck then drove home to do the evening chores.

Thelma observed my injured hand and said, "Dork, what in the world happened to you?"

"Oh, I just messed up my finger a bit."

"Well, take that rag off of it and let's clean it and do it up right." she said.

"I'll go do chores first and then we'll see about it. It doesn't hurt too much."

I managed to milk the cows (fortunately using [mechanical] milkers) and took care of various other duties. Then I entered the house, ate supper and finally asked Thelma to find the Lysol.

"I guess I had better clean the finger in Lysol to kill any infection which may have set in."

"Yes, we better. Here, I'll help you," Thelma said as we removed the blood-soaked bandana then washed the mashed finger in the antiseptic solution. Soon she had rewrapped the finger and the washing ordeal was over.

In a short while, after the pain of washing and cleaning had subsided a bit, I said, "I'm going to get my glove and turn it inside-out and see how much blood is in it."

She helped me as we rolled the index finger of the glove.

"Well, what is this?" I said.

"Dork!! That's part of your finger!" she exclaimed as she gazed at the ghastly object.

True, the entire skin and nail section had been crushed off the end of my finger. I hadn't realized it was missing!



Dad's homebuilt truck, trailer, and logging tractor, which he used in his timbering activity with Floyd, 1945.

My brother, Brent, wrote of Dad's mechanical skill in his autobiography: *I still remember that it was difficult, because of rationing, to buy such things as vehicles, some types of clothing, gasoline, and other stuff which was needed in the war effort. As a result, my dad somehow created a "tractor" from old cars, and although it was a strange thing, it apparently worked pretty well. Many other nearby ranchers, on the other hand, either had to get along with no tractors and other farm equipment or had to pay exorbitant prices to buy new ones or to keep their old ones running.*[12]

Floyd Davis, also mechanically gifted, had a similar set of logging equipment. His son, Dean, wrote of his father's creativity in his own 1983 history: *"In the beginning of [my Dad's] logging he used the horses but he soon got rid of them and built a tractor from a Model A Ford car and then he made a bigger one from a 1935 Chevrolet truck. He cut the driveshaft and shortened it to about a foot and a half and it had individual rear brakes so it would turn almost like a caterpillar tractor. It had a belt drive on the front to a winch on the rear for skidding lots and a side arm crane could be put on to lift the logs onto the sawing deck."*[13]

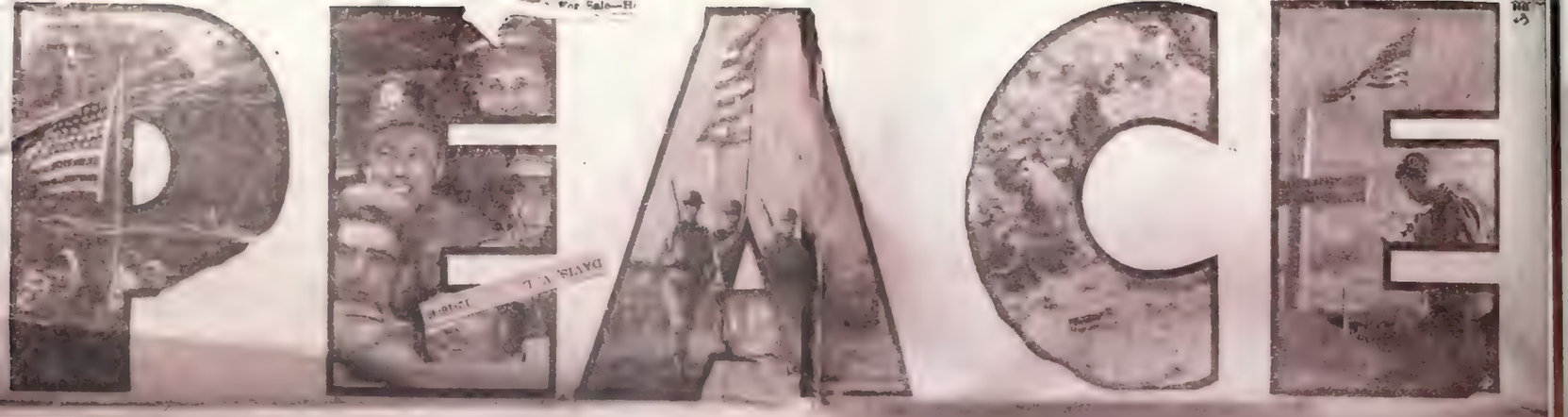


Thelma's 1944-45 second grade class at Lincoln School in St. Anthony. Thelma is on the back row, far left.

To supplement ranch income, Mom taught school for three years. The first year (1944-45) she taught second grade at Lincoln Elementary School, the school she had attended as a girl. Thema signed a contract to teach a second year at the St. Anthony school but when she was offered a substantial pay increase from the nearby Twin Groves school district, she broke the contract and taught for the next two years there, instead. Another key factor in changing schools was Twin Groves' close proximity to the ranch.[14]



Thelma's 1945-46 school class in Twin Groves, Idaho. She earned $170.00 a month for ten months at this school, a substantial increase over her $107.66 monthly pay at Lincoln School the year before. Thelma is on the back row, far right.



The Post-Register

Army to Release More Than Five Million in Year

Those Under 26 to Be Drafted.

When the Sirens Blared

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 166)

As I had done many times before, I completed the morning barnyard chores, did some irrigating, quickly ate breakfast, then drove the '35 Ford truck as it pulled a four-wheel trailer behind. I had driven to the upper ranch to load and haul hay back to the home ranch. Here, the alfalfa hay was stacked in convenient places for feeding during the ensuing winter.

The weather was beautiful — clear skies and warm, but not hot.

I pitched several piles of hay upon each hayrack then I climbed aboard and tromped the feed so I could easily load some more. Then I drove the truck-trailer forward to the next group of hay piles.

During all this time I was thinking about the news reports of the Japanese-American war. The news of the atom bomb had come to us and I was wondering how many of these would be used before the war would end.

Germany had previously surrendered but Japan was doggedly resisting all Allied advances. The past years had been traumatic and people were growing very tired of war. The death and destruction had been enormous and hearts were heavy. Personally, I was hoping for a world peace. Then, perhaps conditions would improve and normality could take the place of the frustration that had existed. Perhaps then, also, I would not have to ask Thelma to assist me in the fields as she had so graciously done since the start of the war.

I loaded some more hay upon the racks. I climbed up again and tromped some more. A third time I drove forward and loaded more hay upon the half-filled hayracks.

I was thinking about general world conditions as I again walked upon the rising mounds of hay. All was very quiet except for the soft crunch as I trod around — then I heard a shrill sound. I stopped and listened and I turned and peered toward the southwest. Very, very clearly I could hear the siren, which was located at the Idaho Industrial School. This institution was located west of St. Anthony and was about seven or eight miles from where I was now working.

The sound was continuous — not the bleep-bleep heard when an inmate had escaped. Therefore I knew that something unusual had taken place. I was listening intently then I heard another siren blast, this one from the fire station in St. Anthony. Together they were telling all who could hear them that THE WAR WAS OVER!!!

No ears were more eager to hear the double blast than were mine. Quickly, I finished loading and then I drove as rapidly as I dared as I headed for home. When there I rushed to the house and was greeted by Thelma as she excitedly told me of the radio news release. Together we expressed our gratitude to God for the end of open hostilities.

True, I was not a member of the armed forces but I can honestly and proudly say that, as members of the "home front," we did what we could to assist the war effort.

Incidentally, Thelma and I were born during the first World War. We have lived through three other major conflicts: World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War. At this time (1981) I wonder if even yet we will have to face another!! If so, will the sirens blare again in victory?



Photo courtesy Keith McCord Hall

The Jick & Ruby Hall Family and the Versal & Thelma Davis family

as they appeared at the end of World War II at the Hall's home in Twin Groves, 1945. Thelma Hall Davis was the oldest living child in the Hall family and the only one married at the time of this photograph. Standing in back: Rada, Ray, Keith, Clifton, and Nola Hall. Front Wayne, Jick, Ruth, Ruby Hall. Next are Thelma and Versal Davis, and their three sons: Brian (between his parents), LaVel, and Brent. The three Davis boys played back and forth frequently with their Uncle Wayne and Aunt Ruth, who were near their age and lived nearby.

Tragedy at Island Park Reservoir

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 117)

(The following account combines the first-person perspectives of both Versal and Thelma)

Thelma: The bilious clouds were settling over the mountain-shrouded lake, and its fringe of pines was beginning to sigh. At first the sigh was high in the pine tops like a spirit passing through.

I looked at the tip of my fishing pole; it was quiet. I looked around for my three boys. They were nowhere in sight, but I heard a distant "pop," two more "pops," and boyish shouts and laughter. I relaxed and settled back on the blanket to crochet and nigger-fish again.

Pat [Dad's brother]and Myrtle [Pat's wife] had left about an hour ago, Dork was out trolling alone in his little boat, and I was thoroughly enjoying the serenity. . .There were only a few boats on the lake, in fact, I could only see three and one of those was Dork's putting cockleshell. I noticed that he was staying closer to shore now, much closer.

"He must be watching that sky," I thought.

The bobbing tip of my propped pole caught my eye and I was busy for awhile. When I tried to cast my line out, the rising wind whipped it far to my right and I had to recast several times before, during a lull, I spotted



it far enough out. Soon Dork putted his little boat up to the beach and climbed out.

Together we watched the white-caps run higher and higher on the lake. Contentedly we listened as the wind rushed roaring through the bowing pines.

Suddenly Dork sat up to watch a large boat, a very heavily laden boat, go laboriously past our peninsula. There were at least fifteen men, women and children aboard. Dork worriedly focused his binoculars and watched the slow progress of the craft as it headed into the wind. Dork swore and handed the binoculars to me.

"They're crazy!" he exclaimed, "Plumb crazy to be out on that lake in this wind . . . and with kids . . . and I couldn't see any life jackets . . . and loaded like that! You couldn't pay me to go out there the way this lake's runnin' now."

I watched the boat wallow along heavily until Dork asked, "Where're the boys?"

I quickly realized that I didn't know just where our boys were, so I hastily volunteered, "Oh, I'll go get them while you load up. No use trying to call them in this wind."

Dropping the binoculars on the car seat, I headed along the spray-whipped edge of our peninsula.

"I haven't heard those boys for at least half an hour," I worried. "And they could start a fire with those firecrackers." I hurried faster. Mounting a little rise, I looked down on my three boys huddled together in a little hollow well out of the wind. Suddenly Vel put a goggle-eyed frog out in front of them. The frog blinked and heaved trying to disgorge an abject from its gaping mouth. Then the frog flew to pieces with a "pop."

By the time the four of us reached our car on the tip of the peninsula, Dork had dismounted his little five-horsepower motor and put it in the trunk of the car. The boat was pulled up by the trailer. Dork was packing and cleaning the fishing gear. I walked down to retrieve my staked pole and slowly reeled it in. The boys followed me, grumbling that they didn't wanna go home yet. Dork called us to help lift the boat onto the trailer.

Brent stopped. "I heard something!"

We paused and looked around our windswept peninsula. There wasn't another person or car in sight.

"C'mon! Let's get this boat loaded."

"I heard someone yell," insisted Brent.

We all looked out at the frothing lake. Dork muttered, "Hell! I hope not!" He looked at me.

I climbed up on the car, and, standing on its top, I looked hard. Then I saw it way out in the lake, and during a lull we heard it.

Dork never even looked; he dashed to his little boat and began to drag it back down the beach.

"Get my motor! Get that damned motor out of the trunk! Hurry! Hurry!"

Sobbing, I wrestled the trunk open and stumbled down the beach with the motor.

"You can't go; you can't go out in this wind with this little thing!" I sobbed. "You can't!"

"I can't stay!"

He never even looked at me as he frantically fought to mount the motor on the back of the bucking boat. As the boys and I struggled to steady the boat for him, Dork kept half-crying, "And with all those women and kids! Those d___ fools!"

And then new terror struck me. "They'll swamp you! Just one person could flip this boat over! You know that! Please, please, let's go for help!"

"Get those innertubes! All you c'n find! Hurry! Hurry!" he shouted. We could only find two that were still inflated.

The motor sputtered and died twice. Dork was trembling with urgency as he yanked the starter again and again. Finally the little motor coughed, then alternately roared and muffled as he turned lakeward.. . . He was doggedly bobbing out toward a barely discernable object. And he, big man though I knew him to be, looked so pitifully puny.[15]

Versal: I started the motor and then set out toward the individual in the lake. The waves were tossing the small craft wildly and I was forced to go slowly. As I progressed I finally noticed the bouncing object far out upon the water. Steadily, I drew nearer, and as I approached, I saw a single person grasping an empty two-gallon gas can. It was a young woman. Before coming close to her I sternly told her to do exactly as I asked. She weakly said she would, whereupon I let the boat drift to her. I told her to grasp the side of the boat but not to try and enter until I assisted her. This she obligingly did. Then I reached over as far as I dared and grasped her around the waist. She obeyed my requests as I assisted her from the water. She finally rolled over the side of the rocking boat. Immediately she collapsed in a prostrate heap on the bottom of the boat.

I looked hurriedly about and asked, "Who else is out here?"

"No one, now," she weakly answered.

"What do you mean by 'now'?" I asked.

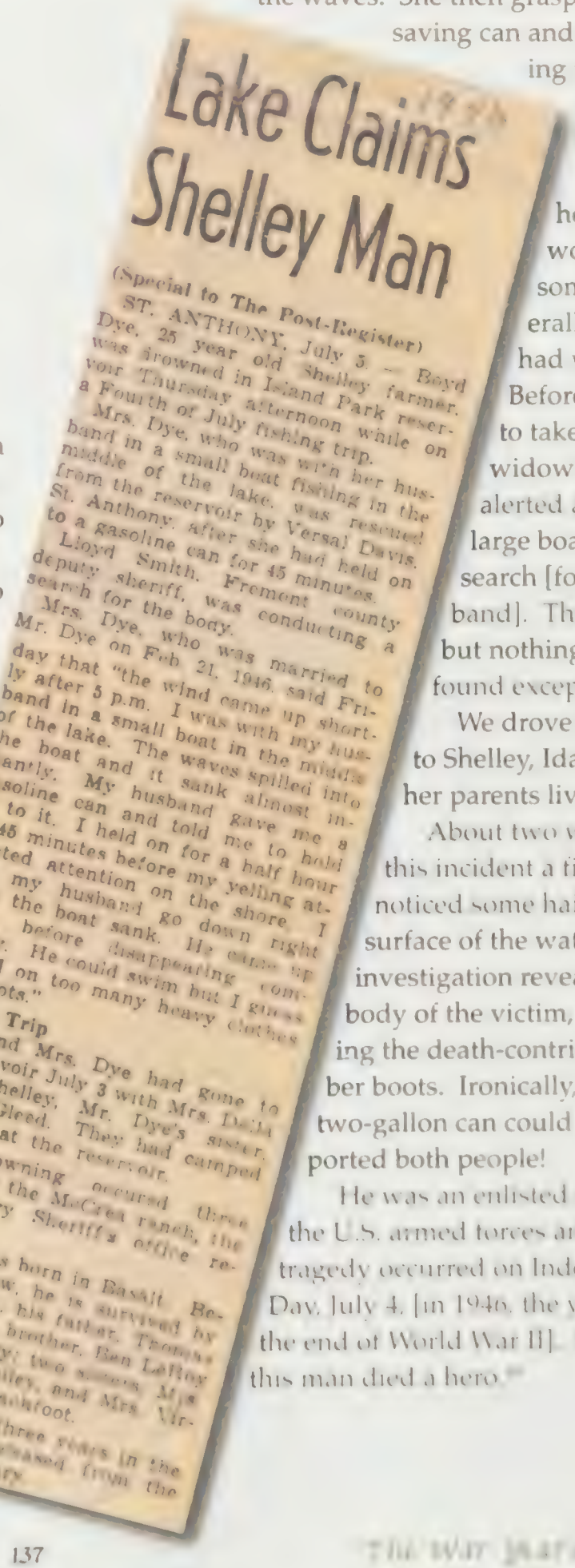
"My husband was with me but he drowned."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I saw him go down."

I took a last look about and, seeing nothing, I restarted the motor and cautiously, slowly returned to where Thelma was waiting on the bank. There Thelma assisted the girl from the boat.

Further questioning revealed she and her husband (of six months) had been using a small boat similar to mine. They had become trapped by the ever-increasing fury of the wind and waves. The husband, a World War II soldier, had realized their danger. He poured the gas from the two-gallon can, resealed it, and told her to hang to it regardless of what happened. The boat swamped, leaving them trapped in the water. He was still wearing rubber hip boots! She said he struggled for a little while then disappeared beneath the waves. She then grasped the life-saving can and was clinging to it when we saw her.



Lake Claims Shelley Man

(Special to The Post-Register)

ST. ANTHONY, July 3. — Boyd Dye, 25 year old Shelley farmer, was drowned in Island Park reservoir Thursday afternoon while on a Fourth of July fishing trip.

Mrs. Dye, who was with her husband in a small boat fishing in the middle of the lake, was rescued from the reservoir by Versal Davis, St. Anthony, after she had held on to a gasoline can for 45 minutes.

Lloyd Smith, Fremont county deputy sheriff, was conducting a search for the body.

Mrs. Dye, who was married to Mr. Dye on Feb. 21, 1946, said Friday that "the wind came up shortly after 5 p.m. I was with my husband in a small boat in the middle of the lake. The waves spilled into the boat and it sank almost instantly. My husband gave me a gasoline can and told me to hold on to it. I held on for a half hour or 45 minutes before my yelling attracted attention on the shore. I saw my husband go down right after the boat sank. He came up twice before disappearing completely. He could swim but I guess he had on too many heavy clothes and boots."

Fishing Trip

Mr. and Mrs. Dye had gone to the reservoir July 3 with Mrs. Della Gleed, Shelley, Mr. Dye's sister, and Mr. Gleed. They had camped overnight at the reservoir.

The drowning occured three miles below the McCrea ranch, the St. Anthonyy Sheriff's office reported.

Mr. Dye was born in Basalt. Besides his widow, he is survived by a son, Thomas, his father, Thomas Dye, Shelley; a brother, Ben LeRoy Dye, in the navy; two sisters, Mrs. Della Gleed, Shelley, and Mrs. Virginia Meyers, Blackfoot.

Mr. Dye spent three years in the army and was released from the service last February.

Thelma helped [the woman] into some dry coveralls, which I had with me. Before leaving, to take the young widow [home], I alerted another large boat owner to search [for her husband]. This was done but nothing was found except a paddle.

We drove 150 miles to Shelley, Idaho, where her parents lived.

About two weeks after this incident a fisherman noticed some hair near the surface of the water. Further investigation revealed the body of the victim, still wearing the death-contributing rubber boots. Ironically, the two-gallon can could have supported both people!

He was an enlisted member of the U.S. armed forces and this tragedy occurred on Independence Day, July 4, [in 1946, the year after the end of World War II]. In a sense, this man died a hero.[16]

Just Let Me Rest, Jim

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 172)

A good friend of mine, James Rydalch, had invited me to join him as a hunting companion for the day. We decided to hunt for elk in the Island Park area, so, after choring, I joined him and we drove to the flat tree-covered territory east of the main highway. The snow was about eighteen inches deep and was wet and heavy. The temperature was moderate.

We trudged eastward as we threaded through the dense pine forest. Occasionally an elk track was found but, none were fresh.

Jim was a tall, lithe, rawboned man who strode on relentlessly through the knee-deep snow. I was in great physical condition but my legs were not as long as his and, therefore, I became more physically tired than he. Jim realized this and would stop frequently and let me get my breath.

We had walked and waded for two or three miles when we found fresh tracks of several elk. Elatedly, we tracked these animals for a while sensing we were close at times.

Jim led out and I followed in his wide-apart tracks. After a while I whispered, "Jim, hold up a minute. I've got to rest."

In his nice way he stopped and we rested for a minute or two — then on again. After several of these stops I suggested, "You go ahead. I'll rest here until I hear you shoot or until you come back. "

He replied, "Well, it is getting late so I'll walk on for a ways and then come back here. I won't be gone long."

So Jim proceeded on the quest. I heard the crackling of brush as he disappeared. Then all was quiet. I leaned against a tree then I slowly slid downward until I was sitting upon the soft snow. This was restful and I enjoyed gazing upon the serenity of the white blanketed world around me. I nodded my head a time or two as I almost dozed. This lasted for perhaps half an hour when I saw Jim returning.

"Boy did we ever flub! Those elk were right behind that bunch of brush right over there," he stated as he pointed from where he had come. "They must have heard us talking and took off. I saw them once or twice but I didn't get a chance to shoot."

"Well, it's too late now so I guess we had better start back," I remarked as I remained seated against the tree.

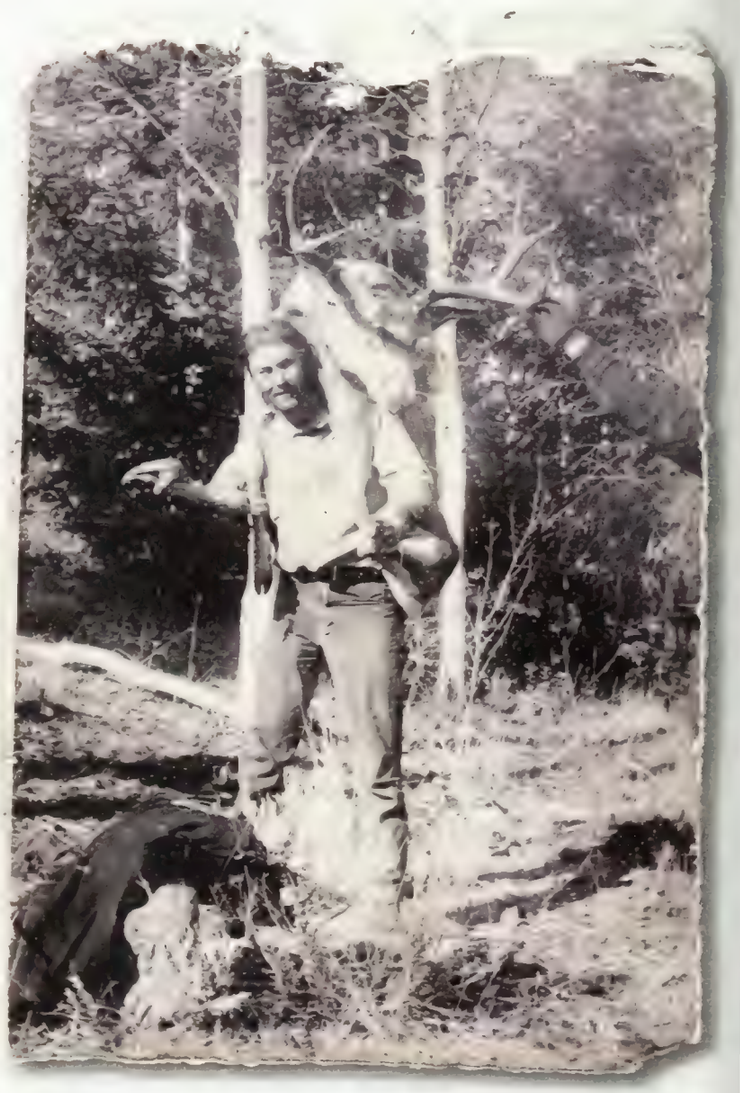
"If we go due west we will hit the highway in about an hour." Jim remarked as he started to go. I reached over and picked up my rifle and then leaned forward to rise to my feet, but . . . nothing happened. I tried again — I could not get to my feet!

"Hey, Jim, come here a minute," I sheepishly asked.

"Well, pal, what's wrong? Can't you get 'em to work?" He inquired.

"Just give me a hand. I think I'll be OK," I replied. Jim helped me to stand erect. I wavered as he held me from collapsing back to the snow.

"Go easy. I'll get you loosened up," he instructed as



Dad successfully shot this trophy buck on his very first deer hunt. His neighbor, Lester Carter, organized the hunting trip into the Salmon River country of Idaho in the fall of 1943 and invited Versal to join the group. Mom often joined Dad on subsequent hunts; they not only enjoyed comradery with other hunters and the adventure hunting provided, but additionally the meat they brought home was a welcome addition to their food supply. They became adept in butchering, canning (or freezing), and cooking the venison.

I took a haltering step. I tried another, then still another. Soon I felt strength returning to my formerly paralyzed limbs.

With Jim's needed help I was soon able to walk alone. Slowly, we returned to the road where our car was parked.

Had it not been for Jim's help I would have remained in that sitting position where I, no doubt, would have frozen to death.

My fatigue, coupled with the crippling effect of the cold snow, had made me subject to the merciless onslaught of Mother Nature.

Note: I know of an instance where and when a man, afflicted such as I had been, actually died in a similar situation. This happened in the same area.

By Our Smell

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 49)

It was the last day of our stay at Teton Peaks Council Scout Camp. My hungry troop of boys had eaten just about all we had in camp. It had been a very active week in which many phases of outdoor scouting skills had been taught. But this was Friday morning and final tests and preparations for breaking camp were being taken care of.

I watched the boys as they moved about and, noting that they were OK, I went inside the cook tent. I was not concerned about the low supply of food because I knew the boys were not hungry and we had enough to tide us over.

But I was somewhat hungry, and, observing a large paper sack, I peered inside. It was full of large onions. We had plenty of bread and butter so I simply prepared a thick onion sandwich. I sprinkled some salt upon the onions and then, closing the sandwich, I stepped outside. Some scouts watched as I ate and enjoyed the tasty treat. I thought little of this as I had done this many times before.

"Mr. Davis, what are you eating?" I was asked by one of my scouts.

"Just an onion sandwich," I replied.

"You mean those onions from that sack in there?"

"Sure, they're good this way," I offered.

"Well, aren't they nasty?" I was asked.

"Why no, this is good," I said as I took another large bite.

"Well, can we try some?" one boy asked as he spoke for all members of the troop.-

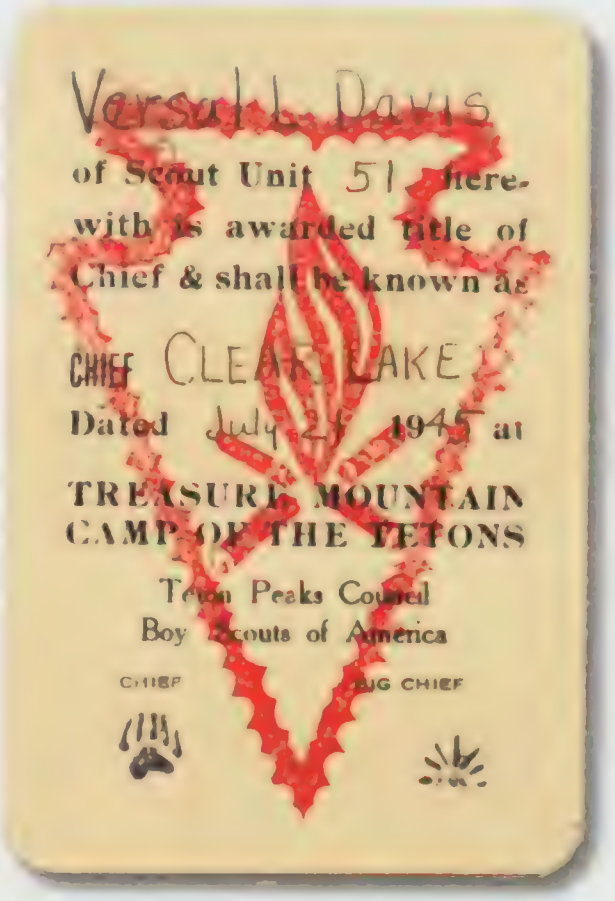
"Sure, make one sandwich and each take a bite. If you like it, then make all you want."

Thereupon I assisted them as they made a sample sandwich. They tried a bite or two with audible "Ugs" and "Oh's." Then one boy said, "Boy, I didn't know onions like this could taste so good."

"Me neither," another added.

By evening all that was left was the empty paper sack. The bread supply had diminished greatly also. Members of other troops could easily identify us by our smell.

I'm sure some mothers were taken aghast by the reports of their sons when they reported about their new food treat.



During the latter part of Versal's ranch years he served as a scout master in the St. Anthony First Ward. This was the beginning of an association with scouting that lasted for several decades and a move to another state. In a 1964 rough draft of his life history Versal wrote:

A short time before I left the south I became interested in the church sponsored Boy Scout movement. I became a committee of the St. Anthony First Ward. Later I served as scoutmaster of the St. Anthony 3rd Ward and then became a member of the administration staff of the Fremont District. I met many people in that position and I hope I have done a credit to some of them. LaVel and Brent became interested in this work and later in Logan, Utah, these boys and I were awarded the eagle rank. I also received medals and certificates there as a committeeman and leader. This activity has apparently become an indelible part of my life because I am still associated with a Lancaster, Mayer district meeting with the Circle Valley Council.



In this December 1946, 3-generation photo **Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis posed with her son, Floyd Ervin Davis, and her namesake granddaughter, Alice Dorothy Davis**. The portrait was produced five months before the elder Alice's death from cancer on 12 May 1947 at age 72.

Leaving the Ranch
(Flashback)

After Dad's sudden passing Mother lived for some time on the ranch, but then she fell victim to ill health and required constant care. Thelma was teaching school and therefore was unable to properly assist. So finally Mother went to live with other family members, where she stayed for short periods of time. While she was ill and bedridden in Bert and Vera's home in St. Anthony, she passed away. I recall very clearly when this took place. I was actually happy that she was now free of her physical pain and had joined Dad in a continuation of their life together.

During the later years of my married life on the ranch I became interested in repair work on automobiles. This sort of work interested me and eventually I worked out an apprenticeship during two winters at the local Chevrolet dealership. During this time I also managed caring for the needs of the ranch. However, as time went by, I realized more and more that ranchin was not fulfilling my vocational desires. So, when an opportunity arose for permanent employment in a ne autobody shop, I accepted. This decision involved selling a small interest in the ranch. I used what proceed I received as my share of the family estate and purchase or rather made a down payment on a comfortable home in St. Anthony. So my severance from ranch life to urban living took place and therefrom I have been "city dweller."

How Did It Get There?

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 64)

When Thelma and I left the ranch in 1947 we were obliged to get rid of various objects which would no longer be of use to us. I sold some things and simply gave away others. There was one article which I felt I should destroy.

I had several sticks of dynamite which had been protected and semi-hidden for several years. I talked to the president of the canal company and he advised me to simply destroy the dynamite material. This actually belonged to the Dewey Canal Co, of which I had been water master.

Most of the material was simply broken open and disassembled but I felt I must have some fun with three full sticks.

So one quiet day I went to the northwest of the farmyard area, a safe distance from the house and farm buildings. In a conspicuous spot lay a large and thick lava rock. It was much too heavy to bodily lift into a suitable position for dynamiting. So, I excavated beneath it making room for the three-pack. I assembled the fuse and cap and placed such with the three sticks. Then I piled loose dirt around the entire rock, leaving the extended fuse in a lightable position.

After all was ready I looked all around to make sure no one or nothing would be in danger then I touched a match to the fuse. It sputtered a bit and then gushed forth the characteristic [audible] "sssss." I then ran back toward the farmyard buildings and, in a safe place, I watched the spot from which I had just come.

All of a sudden the dynamite cap exploded, which caused the three-pack to explode also. The rock, minus small pieces, rose quickly into the air forming a graceful arch as it rose higher and higher, while also moving east across the county road. Then it started to descend and did so coming to a dusty stop in the freshly-plowed ground of the neighbor's field.

I was amazed that it was lifted so far. I walked over to it and glanced around. No other rock of any kind was near it. Even with a few fragments blown away, the object was too heavy to move so I simply let it lay.

I've often wondered what the neighbor thought as he discovered this impediment in his newly-tilled field. What could possibly have dropped it there? No wheel tracks, no skid marks, just plain plowed ground. Did it come from a star? Was it a meteorite? Or was he just seeing things? Anyway, how did it get there?

Lava rock on Upper Ranch, 2008.





Sand Creek Road looking south towards St. Anthony, 1988.

Then and Now

(Flashback, Journal Iii, p. 136)

Right now (in 1987) I am parked on the summit of a lava rock hill on Sand Creek Road north of St. Anthony. I can see the area south and west of me where the home ranch rests. Also I can discern the general area of the 160 acres comprising the old upper farm. This area is directly east of me.

I am visited with deep thoughts about the memorable past and how conditions now try to erase such. But I have a firm resolve to retain my precious memories of years ago and so the present condition of this special area does not dim my great appreciation of the past.

I wish to record some comments on several items of immediate interest. Of course, my remarks will be flavored with personal conviction but nevertheless I record my impressions here.

THE SAND CREEK ROAD — Sand Creek Road used to be a worrisome course that led north to the mountains from which the clear waters flowed. The original road was rough, unstable, and meandered some as it coursed over the general terrain. In early spring the low areas were virtually impassible and the high lava rock surfaces were constantly rough. Because of its rough nature, it offered semi-seclusion from general public travel found in many other areas.

I remember travelling the old road many, many times as I did so with teams and wagons or later with logging trucks. Wildlife was often seen along the route and range cattle were common to the area.

At this time now, the first few miles leading north are actually graded and paved, something I never believed would ever happen. The rest of the road is graded, contoured, and graveled. I miss many of the unique early conditions of the road but I must admit that later years have brought betterment.

ACCESS ROADS — Years ago there were definite and useable access roads leading from the home place and also from the Sand Creek Road. These roads led to ranch areas, which had been developed.

At this time practically all of these special roads, which I used for many years, are no longer in use. Why? This reflects the fact that man, to a great extent, now can travel whenever and wherever he wishes with the new development in all-terrain trucks, tractors, and other machinery. A definite passable road is not always necessary. People are going and coming from the isolated area on roads other than the originals. They do so as they wish and where they wish.

Again, is it good or is it bad? I guess I am old fashioned but I look back to the time when the first access roads were used. I would miss them now if I were required to live again in the area.

ELECTRIC AND UTILITY LINES — I recall how many years ago the only public utility we had was a common wind-up telephone.

I well remember when electricity became available. I prewired the home and various outbuildings. This was simply but effectively done as I tried to minimize extra clutter and inconvenience. I was pleased to modernize in this respect because I realized the great help obtained by using energy in a practical manner. This all proved to be good and very useful.

But now, as I glance around, I see a profusion of power lines, poles, lights, signs, electric motors, and other power-related items. I wonder if all such is really necessary and prudent.

The disarray of utility availabilities is everywhere and I firmly believe that a sensible consolidation is in great need.

Of course, I have not been able to go into the old home or any of the houses in the area but I suppose they are using this energy. I hope such is being done more profitably than the myriad of wires, lines, and pipes would suggest.

BUILDINGS OF THE HOME RANCH — I just wish I could be as optimistic about the home ranch and the buildings as I am about the Sand Creek Road, but I can't. I look with dismay as I glance over the disarray of improperly constructed buildings, fences, and corrals that now clutter the home place. I suppose people have different ideas but it is saddening to me when I visualize the lack of uniformity in the buildings etc.

The house, itself, has been remodeled until it only vaguely reminds me of our old lovely home. I suppose that inside it is now more to the liking of the individuals who now live within. But the simple design, which I remember so well, is now practically gone forever.

The old cow barn, which we used to have and which I helped Dad construct, is no longer there. The potato pit, which I worked in so many times, has been filled in and unsightly buildings and sheds have been erected Instead.

The chicken coop, which I constructed many years ago and used for a long, long while, is no longer in evidence.

The repair shop/garage, which I personally built, no longer exists because a fire destroyed it.

The yard itself, which used to be open and uncluttered is now just the opposite. Old useless machinery, scattered boards, fencing material, barnyard scum and debris cover the area instead.

There is one thing that does remain and of which I am very proud. Thelma and I developed and seeded a beautiful front yard lawn; most of this still remains. The beautiful flowers, which we planted are not now in evidence. However, a large crab apple tree, which is



Versal surveys the Davis ranch in 1988, four decades after moving from the property



A 1982 view of the horse barn constructed by Versal and his father, Gould, on the Davis ranch many decades earlier using lumber they hauled from the nearby mountains. The back of the ranch home is at the right.

Of this structure Versal wrote: *The horse barn is the most [illegible] The [illegible] weather[?] not a completely gone and a layer of [illegible] as a cover over the [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

about 70 years old, still remains.

I remember how things used to be and it is my (perhaps biased) opinion that the home and outbuildings were much more desirable years ago than what exists there today.

I wish to forget about the present picture and, instead, cement in my mind the glorious mind-memory of the place in yesteryears.

TREES AND SHRUBS — As I glance over the land comprising the old home area, and as I have viewed the landscape of the upper farm, and other areas adjacent to it, I notice something vastly different. In a way I can understand this and yet in another I cannot.

The trees that seemed to be in great abundance years ago are no longer in evidence. And many bushes — wild varieties in most cases — used to blossom with colorful panorama. Again these no longer exist. I well remember how, along the low places next to the water, willows and bushes used to grow in profusion. These trees and willows provided refuge for myriads of birds, but now few birds are seen.

If I were to live here again, I would miss the presence of these most welcome natural residents. But it seems that farmers have cleared the waterways of what they thought were troublesome growths. I suppose this helped so far as proper irrigation was concerned, but in doing, this robbed the terrain of a natural beauty that now is badly needed.

GENERAL CLUTTER - I believe one of the most disheartening aspects of this area is the tremendous clutter and disarray that generally exists. This is composed of not only cans, boxes, rotting boards, and old fence posts, but also decaying, falling down buildings. Furthermore, in the general area, which I knew so well, there were only a few homes. Now there are also many trailer houses and mobile structures. These, with rare exception, are poorly situated and organized.



A 1988 view of property on the opposite side of Sand Creek Road from the old Davis ranch home.

IRRIGATION SYSTEMS — As I travel the road leading north of the ranch home I enter what used to be pristine, sagebrush, open range-land. Sagebrush, of itself is generally regarded as a troublesome growth of little beauty, but I distinctly remember how I loved and appreciated the vast expanses of this gray prairie

growth. It reminded me of huge areas of untouched expanse where one could walk or ride horseback and feel free in a pristine extensive wilderness.

But now, again, I suppose the present terrain is regarded by many as progression. Much of this great expanse has been plowed; brush has been removed, and farming is a new industry upon it. To irrigate this land it has to be sprinkled by commercial irrigation systems.

Irrigation itself, from the standpoint of canals and ditches, is still being utilized but I glance around at the situation on the home place and the upper ranch where my Dad and I both developed a watering system through the medium of ditches; this method is no longer used. The waterways will no longer carry water to the places he and I thought were valuable, I know sprinkling is efficient but also is very expensive. Again, is it all worthwhile and best? I question some aspects of this so-called improvement.

UNDERGROWTH AND RANGE — In walking over the 160 acres, which we commonly called the "upper farm," I now look with dismay when I see the incredible encroachment of sagebrush and weeds upon the land, which my father personally developed and farmed and utilized. After his death I did the same thing. I remember those clean acres very well, but now, much of it is simply deteriorated with weeds, thorns, and sagebrush. These have reclaimed much of the land.

This land that we used to farm, for hay mainly, was well taken care of, well irrigated. We used every square foot that could reasonably be developed. We raised feed and rotated crops for the cattle, but now this same acreage is used only for grazing purposes.

I'm not against raising cattle but I think of how my Dad worked for years, how he homesteaded, and painfully developed it — how he cleared the brush, built fences, and seeded the proper areas. He laboriously built ditches by utilizing simple manpower and horse powered equipment.

He did all this in a manner which to me seems much better than that being done by using the sophisticated equipment of today. He made these efforts work and pay off as he provided a living for himself and family.

That land with all the ditches, fences etc. was still ready for others to use when I left the ranch in 1947. But in the 40 years since that time this land has reverted back to the way Dad first saw it.



"Upper Ranch" range, 2008.



Chapter Six

St. Anthony Years

1947-1952

During Dad's thirty-plus years on the ranch his natural abilities as a mechanic had become increasingly evident, especially during the depression when finances were tight and the war years when parts were practically non-existent and creative repair work was essential. He adeptly kept farm machinery running, a skill in great demand.[1] Wanting to build on this innate talent, Dad began to branch out. He had been introduced to autobody repair work by an old friend named Jim Johnson and through his influence became an apprentice at Economy Motors, a St. Anthony automobile repair shop.[2] During the winters of 1945-'46 and '46-'47 he worked in town and at the ranch concurrently.[3]

Another motivating factor for the apprenticeship was Dad's realization that the time for settling his mother's estate was rapidly approaching for she was in failing health. With six other siblings to consider, he knew he might not be operating the ranch much longer. So he weighed his options and decided the time was right to pursue a different vocation. His autobody apprenticeship positioned him well for that change.

Before she died Grandma Davis personally parceled her estate among her children.[4] In April 1947, after the settlement was made, Dad sold his interest in the ranch and put a down payment on a home in St. Anthony;[5] he also signed on as a repairman at Idaho Auto Body, a new repair shop in town. He later became service manager there.[6]

Of this significant turning point in his life Dad later wrote: *The years on the ranch were pleasant and memorable but this change in my lifestyle was needed and proved to be for my best benefit. Though I don't really feel I have benefitted more financially, yet I have grown and matured more perceptibly in the labor field around other individuals. At least I have been gainfully employed since that time in 1948. I have never at any time been unemployed or drawn compensation relating to such.*[7]

Opposite Page: ***"Versal and me** in a red and white formal with flowers on my shoulder and Versal with mustache, 5 March 1946"* (Mom's notation under this photo in the Davis family album.)

Below: Mom labeled this photo: ***"Our Tenth Anniversary Picture, 1947"*** in her album. It's a portrait of Dad, Mom, LaVel (9), Brent (8), and Brian (4), near the time they moved to St. Anthony.



Alice Davis' Death

Only two weeks after dividing her estate among her children, Alice Davis passed away. She died of cancer at age 72 on 12 May 1947 at the St. Anthony home of her daughter, Vera Davis Loveland.

Grandma Davis did not live at the ranch during the last three years of her life. In fact, relationships in the shared home had been under considerable strain at the time of her departure. Her continued "mothering" of LaVel had been an ongoing problem[8] and her physical health had been rapidly deteriorating, a condition which seemed to alter her mental state as well.[9] She began needing care that Dad and Mom couldn't give for they were both gone most of each day — he taking care of ranch duties, she teaching school in Twin Groves. Family tensions developed, which Dad alluded to in his Flashback on p. 10:

After Thelma and I were married, we lived on the ranch and occupied the north section of the ranch home. These were good years but many adjustments had to be made as we struggled to solve many problems. Family increase became apparent and some dissension existed between my brothers and sisters and myself. This was because of misunderstandings between us. However, this never became a major problem and has long since died out.

So Grandma Davis began living for short periods of time with other family members but strains soon developed in their homes, too. Alice, who had previously been happy and likable, was now "difficult," remembered my cousin Jay Loveland. He said his parents (Bert and Vera Loveland) finally arranged for her to live in the old cabin on their ranch north of town and hired Myrtle Flemming (with a grown daughter and young granddaughter) who moved in as well, to see to her needs. This arrangement seemed to satisfy her better.[10]

Jay's sister, Cleova Loveland Peterson, recorded her impressions of Grandma during this time period:

After Grandfather Davis died in 1942, Grandmother Davis seemed to change drastically. She gave her farm to her youngest son Versal. He was to take care of her for the rest of her life. . . . Grandmother stayed for a while and then went to stay with Floyd, Wayne and then Damaris for a short time. After which she came to live with my Parents in St. Anthony. Grandmother stayed for a while but wanted to live alone so my Parents fixed the Loveland Ranch house for Grandmother to live in. I remember Dad and Mother hired a woman to stay with her after she finally consented. She was happy there and remained until she became ill and had to live with my Parents in St. Anthony. She rebelled constantly because she still wanted to be alone at the ranch. She wanted to take care of herself.

As the Cancer progressed, Grandmother became bedfast and [my] Mother [Vera Davis Loveland] had to be with her almost constantly day and night. Her devotion to her Mother is a marvelous thing to remember.

One night I went to help Mother because she was so exhausted and I heard Grandmother praying. She was asking the Lord to take her. She couldn't stand the pain any longer and she felt her life was over, and she was being a burden to those she loved. Not long after this her prayer was answered, Grandmother Davis passed away in 1947.[11]



Alice Davis (right) and Myrtle Flemming, Alice's caregiver during her last two years of life, 1946.[12]

The VLD St. Anthony Home

347 West Main Street



Above: The Versal Davis family home in 1950 located at 347 West Main Street in St. Anthony, Idaho (on the northwest corner of Main and North 4th West). The photos above and to the right were taken while my family lived there.

Dad and Mom purchased this house with the large, sunny, glassed-in front porch on 28 April 1947 for $9,000 from Carl and Eva Lens,[13] using funds from Dad's inheritance to make the down payment.[14]



Right: A side-rear view of the Davis home in 1950. The home's purchase included three lots (numbers 11, 12, & 13 in Block 57).[15] This photo was taken from the northeast corner of the 3-lot property.

Below: The Davis home in 1988. Dad sits on a tree stump on the front lawn of his old home during a visit to St. Anthony thirty-six years after moving to Utah.



Below: The Davis home in 2008. The old home appears to be well-kept in this 4th of July photo taken fifty six years after we moved away.



Repairs Were Free

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 69)

The 1939 Packard looked wonderful with its fresh coat of shining black paint. There were no dents, rough spots, or broken glass. Jim Johnson and I were proud of our joint effort in restoring the car as requested by its owner.

It was parked in the paint room of the Idaho Auto Body Company but we needed the room for a little while as we intended to wash Jim's '37 Chevrolet. This was after hours and it was dark outside.

We simply raised the exit door and drove the refurbished auto outside. Jim left the car then drove his into to the now vacated paint and wash room.

I lowered the exit door, then Jim and I did a little work on his car and washed it. When through, I raised the exit door so Jim could remove his car from the building. He did so and then turned to go to the Packard to drive it back inside. But — no Packard! He had left the keys in the car and someone had stolen it!

We notified the police, described the stolen car, then waited. We knew we were to blame for leaving the keys inside. Now what would happen to it? And to us?

Near daylight we received word. The car was in Idaho Falls, forty miles south, and was wrecked!

The story: an inmate from the local Idaho State Industrial School [a youth detention facility in St. Anthony] had escaped, walked to St. Anthony, spied our shiny prize, decided to steal it and had driven it through town heading south. Our stolen car report had alerted police, who identified the car and gave chase. The thief had driven at high speed, lost control, and had struck a telephone pole.

Jim and I, feeling chagrined, obtained the use of the company wrecker and drove to Idaho Falls. Here we observed the damage, moaned about it, then towed the wreck back to the repair shop. We then spent several days repairing the stricken automobile. Parts had to be



Dad poses in before and after photos of a car damaged in a rollover accident that he and autobody specialist, Harvey Jensen (also shown), repaired in 1946.[16] This is not the same car as the one Versal mentions in this Flashback but is representative of the work he performed for five years at three different St. Anthony autobody shops: first at Economy Motor Company, then at Idaho Auto Body Company, where he served as service manager for two years, and finally two years at Fremont Motor Company.[17]

replaced and worst of all, explanations had to be made to the owner.

All in all, the wash job on Jim's car proved expensive indeed as we paid all costs and did all repair work on the twice-repainted Packard.

Near Tragedy

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 66)

All the mechanics were gone for the day and I was alone in the repair department of the Idaho Auto Body Company. I was service manager at the time and had stayed late to check a few matters. Loy Howard, a part owner, was in the enclosed office area.

A black sedan needed some repair work and I thought I would back the car up and find out what must be done. So I rolled a large, wheeled jack under the differential and pumped the handle until the car was sufficiently high to permit me to use a creeper and slide under. I did this and checked various parts of the rear assembly. I then rolled onto my side and was pulling on a small hanger when, without warning, the car slid from the supporting jack. The heavy, sudden weight rested on my shoulders, pinning me so I could not move. I could barely breath except in short spasmodic exertions.

Realizing I would have to have help, I took two or three short breaths then yelled as loudly as I could. I was rewarded immediately by getting Loy's attention. He rushed from the office, discovered my dilemma, and procured another jack. He quickly placed it under the car, pumped the handle and soon the oppressive weight began to be lifted from me. As soon as I was free I pushed myself from under the auto.

I could now take deep breaths and after regaining my composure, I gratefully thanked Loy.

Had I been alone that evening I'm sure I would have perished. Why was Loy Howard there late that evening? I'm glad he had some clerical work to catch up on.

Harvey Jensen proudly poses by the car he and Dad reconditioned following body damage sustained in a rollover accident in 1946. The photo was taken in front of Economy Chevrolet Company on Bridge Street in St. Anthony, Idaho.





"Some of the old gang at a dinner held in our honor as ***members of the St. A. volunteer fire department in 1951****. We had a very enviable record of fire fighting and prevention."* (Dad's notation for this photo. Unfortunately, he's not in the picture.)

My brother, Brent, commented on the shirts the men are shown wearing here: *"After we moved to Logan and I was in high school, I found a great looking shirt hanging in the closet and asked Mom if I could wear it. It was black and had long sleeves and pearl buttons. Pretty cool, huh? Anyway, Mom told me that it was Dad's fire department shirt, which he wore on special occasions. She gave me the shirt; I wore it, but I don't remember what ever became of it."*[18] (I believe Dad is wearing his fireman's shirt in the photo on p. 181, the 1957 study group picture.)

Volunteer Fireman

One of my most memorable experiences [in St. Anthony] was that of being a volunteer fireman on the local department. Many varied experiences evolved from this activity.[19]

My older brother, Brent, was eight-years-old when our family moved from the ranch into St. Anthony, old enough to have lingering impressions of the five years our family lived in town. Dad's participation as one of the city's volunteer firemen was one of Brent's more prominent memories. He recorded:

While in St. Anthony Dad was a member of the town fire department. It was a volunteer department then and they responded to fires as needed. All volunteers were expected to drop whatever they were doing (they all had other jobs) when the city fire alarm sounded and go to a pre-designated spot in town to meet the fire truck, which then went to the location of the fire. When the alarm [Brent remembered it as a siren; a veteran volunteer fireman said it was a bell] sounded, it could be heard all over town. I guess they all made it (most of the time), but I still remember that when the fire truck went by with its siren wailing, it was always followed by a string of cars. (Some may have been firemen trying to catch up with the truck; others may have been "ambulance chasers," which was illegal.) Fires were a big event in a small town like St. Anthony where little other entertainment was available. It was almost as if people were enroute to a spectator sport, even if it was some poor neighbor's house burning down, or a barn, or a haystack.



Versal's volunteer fireman's badge

I don't remember many of the fires around town because I was too young to tailgate the fire engine in a car, but we did have a house across the street from us (to the west) partially burn. The family had to move out for a few months while repairs were being made, which gave

me the (illegal) opportunity to sneak into their house one day after the fire and look around. The reason I did so was because you don't often get a chance to wander around in a burned out house, but more importantly, the family had a son a few years older than I was and I had heard he had some really neat model airplanes in his room. And he did! During my clandestine wanderings, I found that his room hadn't been burned and he had model airplanes still hanging from the ceiling from threads. They were really great! The only downside was that while I was looking around his room, the family came home, found me there, and my only escape was to tell their son how great his airplanes were. They seemed to be satisfied with that, sent me on my way, and I got out of there.

I guess there was some prestige in being a volunteer fireman back in those days, even if Mom got regularly upset because Dad often came home at the end of the day with burn holes in his clothing. The fire department was in every parade, complete with dressed-up firemen, a red fire engine and all kinds of fanfare. LaVel and I were the envy of every other kid in town because we got to ride on the fire engine with my Dad.[20]



This fire truck was used in the early 50s when Dad was a volunteer fireman and is still proudly paraded through town during St. Anthony's annual Pioneer Day Parade each July 24th. It is also used for more somber occasions as in funeral proceedings for past or present firemen.[21]

In the 1950s the **First National Bank,** centrally located on the corner of Bridge Street and Main, had a large bell mounted on its roof, which could be heard all over town. When the department was notified of a fire in the community, the bell sounded the alert for volunteer firemen to immediately gather at the bank for pickup by the fire truck.[22]

Economy Chevrolet, Dad's place of employment, was conveniently close to the bank, which allowed him to catch the fire truck when needed. Idaho Auto Body and Fremont Motors, Versal's other work locations during his St. Anthony years, were also near the center of town.



Looking south on Bridge Street, 1940s



Lock Jaw

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 129)

Tetanus or "lock jaw," as it is commonly known, is a much-talked-about affliction but few people have actually experienced the ailment. Medical treatment is prescribed to individuals to prevent the formation of the malady before it actually occurs.

The name, "lock jaw," is a suitable appellation given to this painful infection.

My "lock jaw" story took place in about 1949, shortly after Thelma and I had moved from the ranch to St. Anthony. It went about like this:

"Mom, I've got a sore jaw this morning. I guess I'd better have Doc Miller take a look at it."

"Well, if it is still bothering you, then go have your tooth pulled," Thelma replied.

So I excused myself from work at the Economy Chevrolet garage and walked the short distance to the dentist's upstairs operating room. A visual inspection indicated that the left lower wisdom tooth was seriously imbedded and needed to be removed.

"If it needs removing, then go ahead," I resolutely told the doctor. Thereupon, he methodically probed, twisted, and finally removed the offending tooth. He had to break it into two pieces to extract it. But after having done so, he washed the damaged area of my sore jaw and then said, "Well, Versal, we finally got the blasted thing out. Your jaw will be sore for a day or so, but it will soon heal."

I paid my bill and then went home to feel sorry for myself. The medication to relieve the pain was wearing off and, of course, real pain and discomfort now was felt. But I managed through that day and night.

The following morning I went to work but did not stay the entire day. In the evening Thelma said to me, "How would you like to take me to the donkey softball game tonight?"

I replied, "My jaw is still pretty sore but I suppose we could go and watch the fun."

When the hilarious fun started, Thelma and I were seated comfortably in our little car, which was parked on the edge of the baseball field. My jaw was very sore and stiff. It was painful to even try to open my jaw.

During the course of the entertainment several amusing things took place. Laughing, which was normally enjoyable, became a source of mixed emotions to me. I desired to open my mouth and laugh as others did but the pain was unbearable and I, therefore, had to suppress my desire to demonstrate my mirth.

After the game, Thelma and I returned to our home and I tried to rest but this was not possible. Aspirin did not suffice nor did absolute quiet. The night seemed unbearably long but at last morning arrived.

"I'm going to go back and see Doc Miller," I told Mom. She agreed to accompany me and we entered his office in an emergency situation.

With my jaws locked shut, I told him as best I could about my discomfort. He visually inspected my swollen jaw and said, "I believe we had better have you hospitalized and treat you for tetanus. I'll make arrangements to have you admitted in Rexburg. Dr. Rigby will take care of you."

Therefore, I was admitted into a small facility in Rexburg. Dr. Rigby confirmed the suspicion that tetanus infection was the cause of my discomfort.

I became one of the first to be treated with a new drug called penicillin. The war had recently ended and this new prescription was a result of research conducted during the last part of the world conflict.

For about three days I was unable to separate my jaws and ate only strained soup between my teeth, but after that, I was able to eat more normally.

I was lucky to have a new medical marvel relieve me of the physical discomfort.

Singing

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 148)

Dad had a great baratone singing voice. I remember hearing him perform many times when I was growing up. Of his vocal talent he wrote: *Some mention should be made of my activity in singing both in Idaho and Utah. It seems I was apparently blessed with a fair baritone voice. Because of this I have been called upon hundreds of times to render selections (solo, duet, quartet, etc.) at various occasions. I have enjoyed this a great deal and am grateful to my Heavenly Father for this talent and also thank those who have helped me develop it.*[23]

Dad wasn't the only one in the Davis family with musical skills. His older brother, Floyd was exceptionally talented as well. Of him Dad wrote: *He possessed a likeable personality which made him liked by all who knew him. . . he became interested in music and, as a result, became a band member, playing a trombone. This led to his playing in orchestras at dances. He also was a gifted singer and became intensely involved in quartet work. I sang with him and others for many, many years.*[24]

Floyd's "funeral singing" log for 1949.
Entries marked in yellow indicate occasions where Dad joined his brother Floyd and two other men (Myrthan Bassett and Lester Dayton) in a male quartet to provide music for funerals that year. A close scrutiny of the entries shows their sister, Vera, also teamed up with Floyd in performing this compassionate service for neighbors and friends in the small St. Anthony community. The page is one of many from the log Floyd kept for years.

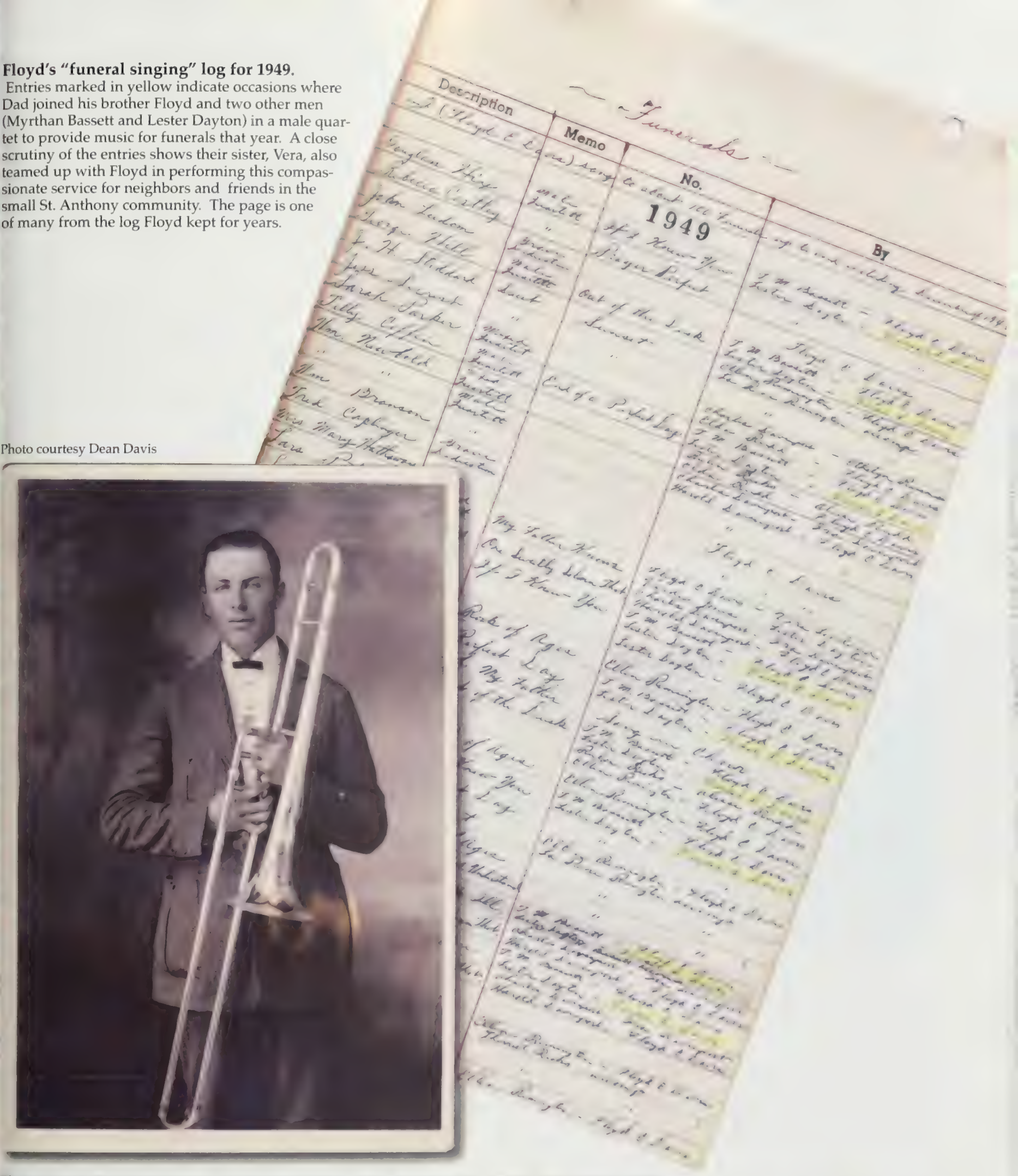
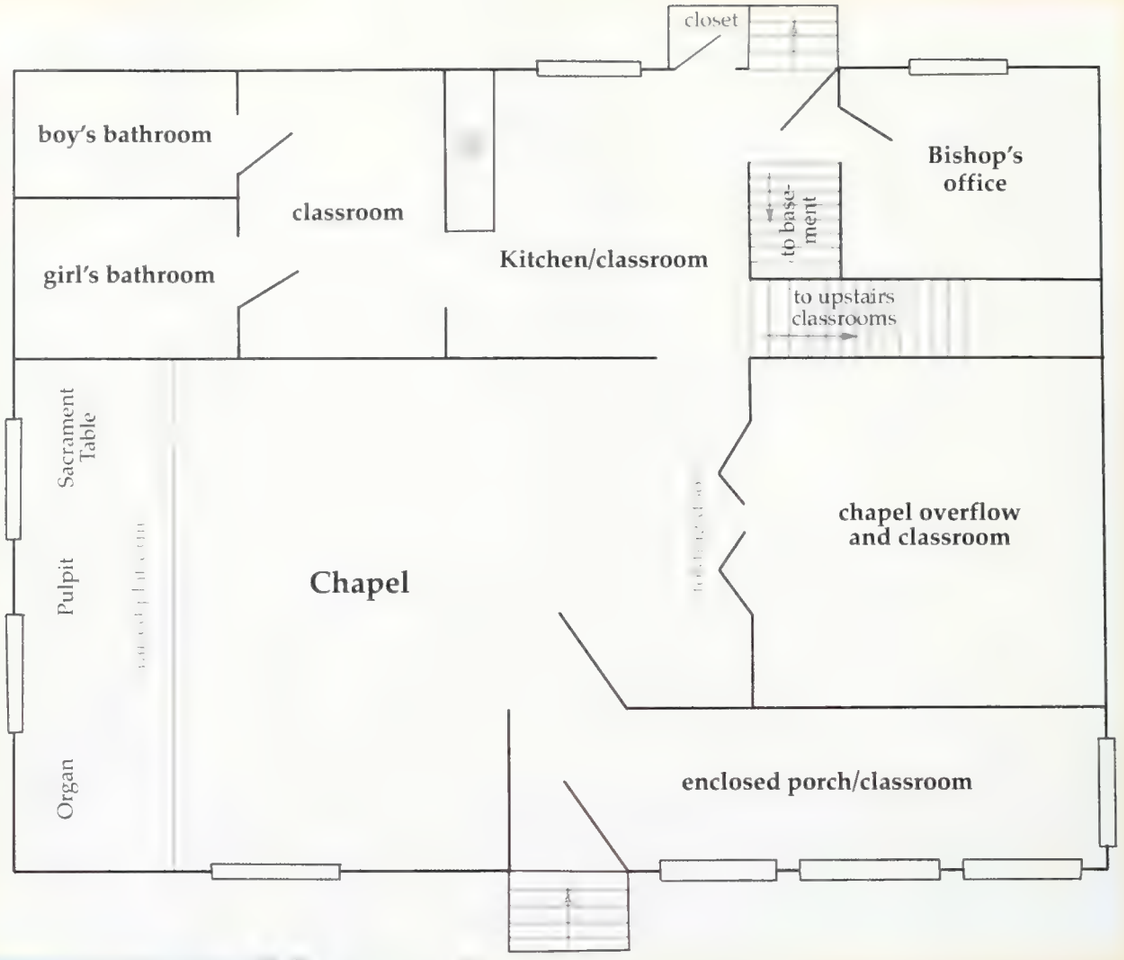


Photo courtesy Dean Davis

Floyd Ervin Davis and his "Conn" trombone, 1926. Floyd's wife, Carrie Crapo Davis, wrote of his musical abilities: *When he was about 12 years old he persuaded his parents to buy him a trombone. At first they just bought him a cheaper one that only cost about $12.00, as they thought he might not do too much with it. At that time they had a band in St. Anthony and Floyd used to walk in from the farm and asked them if he could practice with them. He was very faithful in his practise and showed such interest in it that his parents finally bought him a good "Conn" instrument, paying for it a little at a time from their milk checks. He was delighted with this instrument and learned to play quite well. He played with the band for several years, and then later he got a job with an orchestra playing for dances.*





Above: A rough layout of the St. Anthony Third Ward chapel-home during the years our family went to church there. The home's living room served as the chapel; classes were held on the front porch, in the kitchen and laundry rooms, and downstairs; the Primary met upstairs and sometimes in the basement and a small room tucked away off the kitchen served as the bishop's office.[26] Brent remembers the chapel had an old organ which had to be pumped by foot.[27]

Left: A 2010 photo of the former chapel at 507 West 1st North. On 28 June 1957 the home was sold to George and Ada Ostermiller. Ada, now a widow, continues to live there today (2010).

St. Anthony Third Ward

During their years on the ranch, the Davises had been members of the large, 1300-member St. Anthony First Ward. However, not long before their move into town the ward was divided and a new St. Anthony Third Ward was formed. The Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle building served the needs of the St. Anthony First and Second Wards but couldn't accommodate another congregation so the new Third Ward was left looking for a home. And a "home" is what they found.

A house located at 507 West 1st North was purchased and renovated for use by the new ward and on 13 April 1944, the congregation met for the first time in their new meetinghouse, with forty-two ward members in attendance. The home was dedicated as a chapel a year later by Elder LeGrand Richards, Presiding Bishop at the time. During their St. Anthony years, the Versal and Thelma Davis family attended church here.

Although the quaint home-chapel was loved and appreciated by the ward members, raising funds for a new "real" chapel was a high priority from the start. In 1956, after countless dinners, bazaars, and other fund raisers, the St. Anthony Third Ward moved into a newly constructed building only a block away and the little home-chapel was later sold.

Church Involvement

I hadn't realized until I began writing Dad's history (this biography) that there may have been a time when he and Mom weren't fully involved in church participation. During my lifetime our family life was centered around church activity. However, in his own words Dad indicated such was not always the case. He wrote: *When we took up residence in St. Anthony we became members of the 3rd Ward. While there we carried on the church and civic duties as delegated. I continued my activity in scouting and dancing. I was also involved in the leadership of the Mutual of the ward.*[28]

It was during this time that my wife and I began to take a more serious interest in church and spiritual things. Although I can frankly say, and proudly too, that I never drank or smoked, yet I took little interest in church activity for seven or eight years after our marriage. But growing children make one more thoughtful and therefore, our religious interest and participation increased and has remained a steady influence since that time.[29]

Mom didn't address their possible "less active" status in her own memoires. She simply stated some of the church positions they held:

During our years on the ranch we also found time to work in the Church. I served as second counselor in the Yellowstone Stake Primary and Versal as scoutmaster in our St. Anthony First Ward. I later served as a counselor in the St. Anthony First Ward Primary Presidency.

After the death of Versal's father, we finally decided to sell the farm as Versal's real talents as a mechanic developed and his repair-skills were more and more in demand. In 1947 we moved our family of 3 sons into a home we bought in town in the newly organized St. Anthony 3rd Ward area. Again Versal served as scoutmaster and then as YMMIA (Young Mens Mutual Improvement Association) president. Also, we team-taught the Gospel Doctrine Class.[30]

A Lesson Learned the Hard Way

As related by Versal LaVel Davis on Aug. 5, 1984. Taped and transcribed by Twila Bird, his daughter.

This story has quite a training lesson: when you let your own attitudes and feelings get the best of you, sometimes the spirit of the devil can take over much easier than at other times.

Thelma and I had been to a party one night. This was in St. Anthony in about 1950. We'd been with many other members of the ward there; they were good friends of mine. We'd been talking about some gospel subject — I don't remember what it was — that I didn't agree with them on. Finally I told Thelma we'd better go home. I was angry and didn't want to hear any more about it. We went home. I was upset.

This went on for a day or two! I was brooding and thinking about it and I got more and more upset.

A few nights later, Thelma and I went to bed as usual. I couldn't sleep very well, but I finally did. I was sleeping flat on my back. During the night, I awoke with the feeling that something was stifling me. I felt like I couldn't breath and I couldn't move. Something was directly over me; it was dark and evil. I opened my eyes — I state this most assuredly — I opened my eyes! I could see something over me. It was dark and close to me, just a few inches over my face. It was an evil individual, dark of visage. It was struggling with me; I was struggling with it. I couldn't raise my arms. I was pushing but all I could do was quiver. I couldn't make my muscles respond.

Finally, I thought of something I'd been taught many times in church about the priesthood. I simply said this: "By the power of the priesthood which I bear I command you to leave my presence!" That individual stopped, glared down at me and raised up to the side of the bed. He was a tall man. He looked at me evilly, but he knew I had power. He walked down the side of the bed and out the door. I saw him no more.

After this evil thing left the room, I said, "Thelma, did you see that?" She was asleep but woke up as I spoke.

Mom, who was present when Dad related this experience, interjected at this point:

"I verify what your dad has said. He kept saying, 'Didn't you see it?! Didn't you feel it?! Didn't you see it?!'"

Then Dad continued:

I think I had this experience because I had been having evil thoughts within my own mind and the devil, or one of his helpers, was working on me to make the situation even worse. Evil spirits have power and they'll take advantage of your problems and weaknesses to try to bring you into their power.

I'm Sorry, I Tried

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 39)

Our first child was a boy. Our second child was a boy. Our third child was a boy. Well, we wouldn't trade any of them back in for a girl but we wondered if a fourth would be the same. We, of course, desired a girl but it didn't seem possible.

However, after we had moved from the ranch to a home in St. Anthony, Thelma soon gave birth to another child.

We had made arrangements for the birth to take place in the local hospital located near the Snake River. This is a beautiful setting in the center of town.

When Thelma felt it was time to go there I drove to the facility where she was promptly admitted.
All went normally as she was given anesthetic prior to final birth. After the delivery the attending nurse told me that Thelma had given birth to a baby girl!

I was elated and asked if I could go into the recovery room and talk to Thelma.

"Yes, go right in," she said.

Thelma was dozing and I hesitated to awaken her but I shook her arm a bit and she slowly turned her head toward me.

I had said nothing but she, with half-open eyes, said, "What was it?"

"It's a girl!" I quickly replied..

She started to cry but with trembling voice she said, "I'm sorry, Dork. I tried to get you a girl."

I smiled as she, still unknowing, drifted off to sleep. A pleasant surprise would be awaiting her when she awakened from her stupor.



I (Twila) was born at the St. Anthony Hospital on 2 March 1948. Two years later my sister, Tamara, also joined the Davis family at this location.



6 May 1948. Twila's first baby photo, age 2 months.

Emergency Treatment

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 80)

It was deer hunting season and Thelma and I, together with Wayne and Myrtle and others, were making final preparations for our annual trip to the remote Iron Creek area of central Idaho.

Ed Welch, a close neighbor and good friend of mine, desired to go with us. This we readily agreed upon. We told him to bring a sleeping bag, gun, and a few personal articles. We assured him that we would purchase all the food and other normal needs.

This was soon done and we gathered into our cars and trucks and drove 250 miles to the secluded area. We were expecting to stay about ten days before returning to St. Anthony. No stores were within a radius of about 75 miles.

"OK, you guys, supper is ready," Myrtle said as she and Thelma organized our first meal.

Each of us obtained a cup, plate and cutlery. We were enjoying the meal and some banter went back and forth as we ate and drank some postum [a non-caffeinated hot drink].

Soon Ed Welch said, "That was sure good. All I need now is a cup of coffee."

All the rest of us stopped, saying nothing. Then Thelma injected, "Oh, my gosh, we forgot that you drink coffee. Well, we, uh, we, darn it, Ed, we didn't bring any."

Ed, realizing the hopelessness of getting his favorite drink, simply said, "Well, I guess I'll try whatever you have there."

"We're sorry, Ed," I said.

"Oh, that's alright. Maybe I can kick the coffee habit while I'm here."

So Ed joined us in drinking cocoa and postum.

We had been in camp only about twenty-four hours when Ed came down with a sore throat and severe chest congestion. We offered to drive out and place him under a doctor's care but he resisted this emphatically, saying, "I came here to hunt and enjoy camping with you guys and I'm not leaving here now."

We did, however, convince him to go to bed and rest. We had some mustard and onions, which we mixed together. This we applied, as a poultice, to his chest, keeping him extra warm, also.

After two or three days his condition improved so he could move a bit around camp. We men had been hunting and had several deer ready to bring into camp. But Ed had not been hunting as yet. Finally, as our stay was about over, Ed said, "I'm going out today.

"But, Ed, you're not that well," I replied.

'Well, live or die, I'm going out anyway."

So Ed went hunting. It was painful, I'm sure, but he doggedly went on and on. Late that afternoon, his determination was rewarded as he shot a nice deer. I was with him and I did the physical work of taking the animal back to camp.

During this trip we ran low on food variety so the women, including Thelma, cooked up a delicious mixture of pork and beans mixed with chili. Hungry and much improved, Ed ate voraciously.

Upon returning to St. Anthony Ed told his wife about that last tasty meal. In a day or two she came over to visit Thelma and asked what that special dish was that her husband had enjoyed so much.

Thelma and she had a big laugh when they talked of this simple emergency menu.

Ed's recuperation had whetted his appetite so much that postum, pork and beans, chili, and other simple foods tasted even better at that time than the fancy foods and coffee he normally received at home.

His wife was amazed that Ed had gone ten days without coffee. She said that had never been done before in their marriage.

Ed Welch (left), Ed's brother-in-law, Versal, and LaVel following the deer hunt described in this Flashback, 1949. Ed had been ill on the trip but recovered in time to shoot a deer before returning home.



Was It Worth It?

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 106)

The Loon Creek area of Idaho is located deep within the Salmon River Range, a very mountainous, heavily forested terrain that drains into the upper reaches of the turbulent Salmon River.

Thelma and I, together with Wayne and Myrtle, Dutch, Albert, Dean Davis (Floyd's oldest boy), and others used to go deer hunting in the area each fall. We would plan on about 10 days for the trip. Our success factor was almost 100% as we were able to shoot our choice of deer.

One fall we camped about 10 miles north of a precipitous mountain pass, which we were required to ascend then descend as we went to our hunting territory. During our stay we did many things other than hunting. Prospecting for gold was fun; lounging in camp was great; fishing took some time.

But, one day I resolved to hunt the west mountain in search of a trophy buck. So arising early, I prepared a sandwich, shouldered my .30-06 ["thirty-aught-six" Springfield rifle] and commenced climbing the steep, ragged slope. I proceeded until late afternoon during which time I had seen various deer but not the "special one" I desired. Then, as I labored up a bare ridge, I heard a sound below me and to the left. Immediately a tremendous buck ran from beneath the ridge and crossed over behind me. I instinctively fired and the animal dropped just under the ridge opposite the side it had come from.

I proudly viewed my trophy and then I field dressed it. It was so large and heavy that I could not hang it from a tree. I headed for camp where I reported my success.

Next morning I decided that Thelma, Wayne and I would rent a horse from the nearby ranch. This we did then made the long, hard climb to the place where the deer was. There Wayne assisted me as we loaded the carcass onto the trusty old horse. After securely lashing the deer to the saddle, Thelma and I, with our young son, LaVel [12 or 13 at the time], started the long arduous descent. Wayne left us and went hunting elsewhere.

During our trek we encountered many obstacles, which impeded our progress. Fallen timber was almost everywhere; rock formations were treacherous. After several hours, Thelma's feet were developing blisters. She complained very little but soon her problem became very apparent. We stopped to let her rest a few moments. She removed her shoes and sure enough her feet were badly blistered.

"Mom, why don't you wear my shoes and I'll wear yours?" LaVel asked as he sympathized with his mother.

"I'm not sure I can do that son," she replied.

"Here, try this one and I'll try one of yours," LaVel offered.

Sure enough, the shoe were interchangeable! So the transfer was made and though Thelma's blisters remained, the different shoe style helped and prevented more difficulty.

After hours and hours of descent, during the last of which Thelma clung to the old horse's tail for support, we finally emerged from the mountainside. It was now 11 p.m.! The others in camp were in stitches worrying about us.

This deer was the largest buck I have ever shot, a huge six-pointer. An old miner, who had lived in the area for almost 20 years, said that it was the largest he had ever seen. At this time, in 1981, I still have the beautiful set of antlers as they hang in my garage in Logan.

Elk Hunting in Idaho

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 109)

"There it is, straight over from us, across that draw," I softly whispered to Thelma.

"I don't see it, Dork," she replied more as a question.

In my impatience I sharply explained that the elk was lying down and was watching us.

"Oh, yes, I see it now," she indicated as she nervously raised the rifle.

The gun was moving sporadically and I knew a shot would probably be ineffective so I again said, "Take it easy and don't fire until you're dead on." She again poised the gun and tried to be calm but lowering it, she handed it toward me.

Emphatically I said, "Do as I tell you and furthermore, shoot it in the neck."

Once more the gun was raised to her trembling shoulder. It wavered about then and was lowered to her side. She was crying softly as she faced me. In aggravation I seized the weapon, placed it to my

shoulder, peered through the telescopic sight, aligned with the neck area of the target and then pressed the trigger. The shot was true; the animal did not even arise. I had killed the elk Thelma had received a tag for.

This took place when I was about 30 years of age. The hunt was a special one in which only lucky ticket winners could harvest an elk. The area was in the rugged mountains north of Swan Valley, Idaho. The season was late fall, in November. Snow lay at depths of two to three feet.

We had joined some friends who had also drawn lucky cards. Together, we had travelled to the area, set up our tents, and then each had hunted separately. Thelma and I had climbed up a steep mountain where we had seen some elk earlier in the day. The deep snow was soft but it hampered our upward progress as we trudged ever upward and onward. I had been breaking trail as we went across a deep mountain draw. After climbing out of such and reaching the other side we stopped to rest. It was while doing this that I detected the elk lying in the deep snow up the draw and across from us.

This was Thelma's first elk hunt but I was a veteran of several. I usually joined with some close friends as we hunted these noble animals each year. It was always done in late fall and snow was always present. Snowshoes were usually a necessity as was warm, appropriate clothing. A horse was usually needed to pull the dead elk to camp. Sometimes these hunts required several days of camping and hunting. But it was great fun though laborious.

On one occasion I joined some neighbors as we camped, hunted and assisted each other. This particular hunt was in the Snow Creek area near Yellowstone National Park. It lasted for ten days and included Thanksgiving Day. No hunting was done on that day as we had a sumptuous dinner with all the regular trimmings. Incidentally, there were fourteen of us and when we broke camp to return home, we left with fourteen elk.

Three large bull elk provided meat and bragging rights for Versal and his friends following this hunting trip into the Idaho Swan Valley area in 1951. Dad and Mom are on the right. Our St. Anthony home is in the background.



Guns and Reloading

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 124)

I have always been fond of good guns, especially rifles and hand guns. As a boy I had the usual cap guns. It was great fun to play cowboys and Indians as I joined others in pretending we were the villains or the heroes. Of course, crude bows and arrows, wooden knives, and stick horses were also used.

As I grew older, to about 14 years of age, I became interested in the old Stevens single-shot .22 caliber rifle, which Wayne owned. I managed to "borrow" the gun, with ammunition, enough that I became familiar with it.

Eventually Warren gave me a Savage 23A Sporter. This was, and still is, an excellent bolt-action .22 caliber rifle. I became very proficient with this weapon because it had the qualities needed for accuracy. Warren also gave me a shotgun, a 12 gauge Remington. It, also, was a quality gun. I still own this piece at this time (1981). However, I never became a shotgun enthusiast. I always desired the exacting manipulation of a good rifle or hand gun.

Because of this [fondness for guns], I accumulated during the early part of my married life several .22 rifles and high-powered big game guns. I learned to make special stocks for many of them. These I carved to fit my hands and shoulder. Also, I fitted and installed telescopic sights on many of them.

I shot a great deal and I soon found it necessary to produce my own ammunition. Therefore I purchased a reloading outfit, which served in making ammo for several calibers. This home-produced ammo was far superior to commercial grades because I used extreme care in regulating the amount of propellant, the size and weight of the bullet, and other factors. I used to buy powder in fifty pound kegs, bullets in one hundred count boxes and primers two to three thousand at a time.

Because I shot a great deal, I became a good marksman. I used to go rabbit hunting with other fellows and we would agree to only shoot at a rabbit when it was running. Our success ratio was amazing. Also a certain friend of mine, Al Schnurle, used to buddy-up with me as we went rock chuck hunting. This was done in summer and required using a car or truck as we travelled back roads in the open sagebrush and lava country north and west of St. Anthony.

We took turns as we located the chucks. We stipulated that if the animal was within fifty yards, we could fire one shot from a handgun. If between fifty and one hundred yards, a rifle could be used if it was held offhand. Beyond one hundred yards a rest could be used to hold the gun steady. In any case, only one shot was allowed. If a miss, the animal was left alone. This arrangement was challenging yet rewarding.

In later years, I have done no shooting except sparsely at targets. I no longer kill or destroy any wildlife. My shooting at such is now done with a camera.

I have given most of my guns to my sons and sons-in-law.



Dad holds his rifle and a rock chuck during a hunt with his friend, Al Schnurle, in 1950.

Brent remembers a gun-incident regarding Dad's hunting buddy, Al Schnurle (pronounced Shnerlee). He wrote:

"Once, when our family had been gone for a few days, we returned and found our house door open (nobody locked their doors during those days). But my parents were horrified when they found blood all over the place in my dad's gun room. Apparently, Mr. Schnurle had come over while we were gone and had been using some of my dad's reloading equipment, which he often did. Somehow, he had put his hand over the muzzle of his gun, it went off, and he shot a hole through his hand."[31]

Sand Dunes and Ice Caves

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 171)

During the years that I lived In Idaho I experienced being among the sand dunes which lay west and north of St. Anthony. These were and still are magnificent formations of fine sand. They range in height from a few feet to several hundred feet. They are always clean because of the constant movement of the sand as it is blown by the prevailing winds. Thelma and I have enjoyed many times together as we held picnics and winter sleighing or skiing parties [on the dunes]. To simply walk upon or slide down these natural mounds was a joy of unusual worth.

These same sand hills, as they are commonly called, are utilized now in 1985 as fun spots for ATVs, motor bikes, and other sporting devices. Duane has been to these expansion hills several times.

Also in the same general area but more in the lava rock and sagebrush terrain there are underground caves. These are found over many square miles of open rangeland. Thelma and I, with others, have often entered these and explored as much as possible. These are known as "ice caves" and are suitably named. Water enters these and then becomes almost permanently frozen. But some change does take place. This provides a new experience almost each time each cave is revisited. These are huge walls of ice as well as huge hanging icicles. Also, there are endless deep caverns which have never been conquered.

Occasionally, the trapped remains of animals such as coyotes, badgers, rock chucks, and rabbits are found. Many of these, no doubt, suffered death centuries ago. The constant cold has preserved anything within.

These caverns are not readily found. Sometimes only a small, ground-level opening is indicative of an ice cave's existence.

Photo this page (taken by Versal, 1970s): **a portion of the vast sand dunes a few miles from St. Anthony.** They blanket an area approximately 35 miles long and 5 miles wide, and range from 50-500 feet high. They are a popular recreation area for dune buggie enthusiasts, hikers, and equestrians.

Blaine Singleton, Dad and Mom's lifelong friend, related some of the fun they had in the ice caves located near the dunes:

When we was young before any of us were married, we planned a trip out to the ice caves. We had never been in this one cave before so we took two cases of stubby beer bottles with a wick in it and a couple of coal oil lanterns. Well, this crystal cave (which they named it) was two-story. They let a couple of us down into this second story with these ropes and we got off. The rest just slid down. Well, when Versal slid down he hooked himself on a rock and ripped the seat out of his pants. We all had a laugh at it. But then the cave would open up to a dome roof then it would come down almost to the ice, then dome up again. Well we kept going. We'd been in the cave about six or seven hours and we got down to where the roof got so close to the floor that part of us couldn't get through. Versal and Thelma were too big to slide through and so the ones who were the smallest would slide through in to where it would open up again. Some places the coal oil lanterns we'd have to lay them on their sides to slide underneath where the roof would come down. We went at least five miles under the ground. We went in there when it was eight or nine o'clock in the morning and it was dark when we came out. That's the furthest back we'd ever been in this cave.[32]



Tamara's Birth

During our 4 years in St. Anthony my wife and I received 2 daughters into our home — first Twila and then Tamara. They were very welcome and have both been very choice ever since.[33]



Above: **Mom sits with her mother, Ruby Birch Hall, and baby Tamara** on the steps of the Hall's home in Utah, summer 1950. Jick and Ruby had moved from their farm in Twin Groves, Idaho (near the Davis' ranch north of St. Anthony) to Ogden, Utah several years earlier, in December 1947.

Brent was forcordained to come to our home by Versal as well as by his Father in Heaven. When we were first married, Versal often said that he didn't think he wanted any children - they made him nervous. Having been the last born (Wayne is 7 years older), Versal wasn't used to children, and they have always bothered him some, especially their noise. But when Vel was "on the way," Versal immediately said: "We are having one more!' I won't raise one spoiled brat alone!" So Brent was planned and, in due time, invited. (He is one of the 2 deliberately specified at Versal's request: the other is Tam, and her situation following Twila was much the same. Versal again said: "I won't raise one spoiled little girl with 3 older brothers pampering her!" So he invited our Tam.

Left: **Mom penned this note** regarding her and Dad's two "planned" children (Brent and Tamara).

(For additional perspective on Dad's view about having children, see pp. 193-194.)



Tamara Davis, age 2
b. 17 February 1950

A Lunch Box Surprise

(Flashback. For Brent's version see Chapter Note 34.)

This true account took place within our home in St. Anthony in about 1950.

"Come in you kids and get ready for supper," Thelma remarked as LaVel, Brent, and Brian entered the rear door of our home located at 349 West Main Street. They had just returned from an afternoon of exploration near Twin Groves.

The boys nonchalantly walked through the kitchen area. In so doing Brent placed a common aluminum lunch box on the kitchen table. Thelma began to set the table and as she did so she happened to knock the lunch unit and it fell to the floor. She bent over to retrieve it, when in utter shock she screamed, "Brent, what have you got here!?"

Brent turned and discovered what had happened. He said, "Oh my gosh, there go all my snakes."

Thelma was utterly alarmed as she said, "Gather them all up right now and get them out of here."

So Brent caught each reptile as quickly as he could. They had scattered everywhere in the room.

"You be darn sure you catch every one of them! I don't want any to remain in this room or anywhere else in this house!" Thelma exclaimed.

So Brent continued until no snakes were visible in the room. "I've found 19 of them, but I'm sure I had 20." He replied.

"You search some more right now," Thelma explicitly told him.

Brent searched but no more snakes were found. Mom was very apprehensive for several weeks before she finally settled down.

Incidentally, the lunch box was one I used regularly while working in St. Anthony. I also used it for almost 40 years while employed at the Mill in Logan. Duane has this same box now in 1988.

The Post

SWIMMING HOLE AT ST. ANTHONY



INVIGORATING WATERS of the Snake river provide fun and recreation for St. Anthony youngsters. In the canal where the waters are not so turbulent Red Cross swimming lessons are now underway for the younger boys and girls. Life saving courses for more advanced swimmers are held in deeper holes in the Snake river. All are located in the City park. Shown above getting used to the cold water are several would be swimmers. Left to right, Randy Litton, Byron Davis, Brent Davis, Frank Luke and Allen Vincent. (Post-Register staff photo).



Twila (me), age 2, watches Brian as he swims in the Snake River, summer 1950. The photo was probably taken on the same day as the one taken by the newspaper photographer for the article to the left. My three older brothers learned to swim in the Snake River, as our parents had done when they were young; however, the boys learned in supervised classes whereas Dad and Mom had been self-taught or instructed by family members. St. Anthony's city park (now called Keefer Park) is still a popular swimming spot (in 2011).



LaVel, 1951



Brent 1951



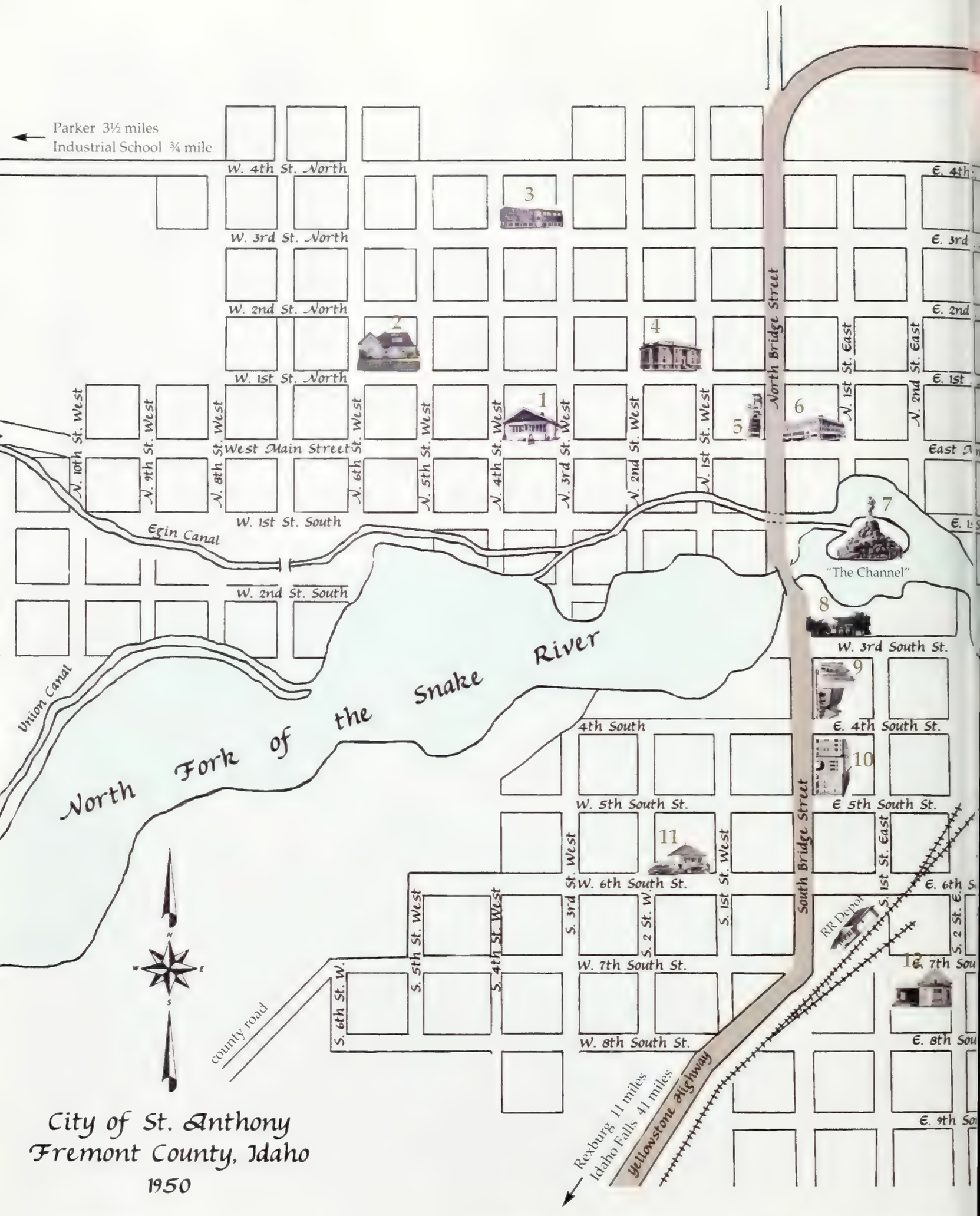
Brian 1948

The Versal and Thelma Davis Family

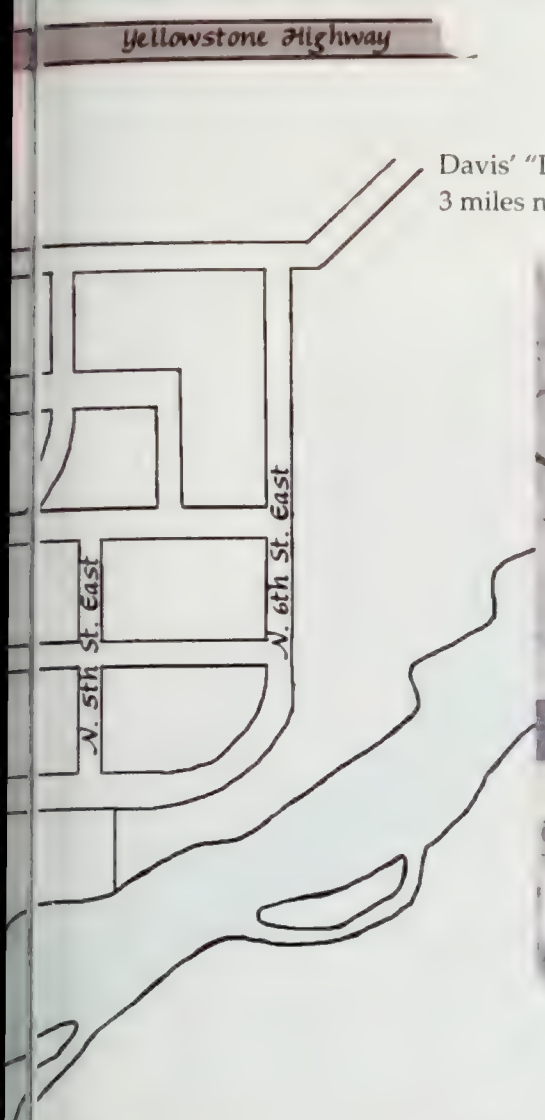
Versal holds Twila and Thelma holds Tamara, on Teton Pass in late 1951







City of St. Anthony
Fremont County, Idaho
1950



This house at 347 West Main Street in St. Anthony became "home" to the Versal L. Davis family in 1947, when Dad gave up ranching and moved to the city to begin his career as an autobody repairman. We lived here for five years.



St. Anthony Landmarks of Importance to the VLD family in the early 1950s

1. The **VLD family home** was located at 347 West Main Street. Twila and Tamara were born during the five years (1947-1952) the family resided at this address.

2. The Davis family and other members of the **St. Anthony Third Ward** met in a converted home located at 507 West 1st North. The living room served as a chapel, the upstairs as classrooms, and a small room off of the kitchen as the bishop's office.

3. Central School, built in 1913, had three stories and 24 classrooms; grades 6, 7 and 8 occupied the top floor; the high school filled the middle floor; and grades 1-5 used the bottom, which also included a gymnasium. For the elementary grades the school served only "northsiders"; however students from both sides of the river attended the school for upper classes. A northsider, Dad attended all of his school years here with the exception of 4th grade at Lincoln School. Mom, from the south side, attended classes here beginning in the 6th grade. The building was torn down in 1974.

4. At the **Fremont County Courthouse** Dad and Mom and both sets of their parents (Gould & Alice Davis and Jick & Ruby Hall), as well as Mom's maternal grandparents (David and Nancy Birch) conducted legal transactions here, most involving deed transfers.

5. Economy Chevrolet. Located on north Bridge Street, this auto repair shop was one of three Versal worked at during his St. Anthony Years.

6. In the 1950s, the **First National Bank Building,** located on the northeast corner of Bridge Street and Main, had a bell located on its roof. When notified of a fire, the bell would be rung signaling volunteer firemen, including Dad, to immediately leave their businesses and run to the bank building to be picked up by the fire truck for transfer to the blaze.

7. Island Park (now called Keefer Park) with its **Doughboy Statue** in the center of St. Anthony was (and still is) an attraction for residents and visitors alike. In the 1920s the island was designated as a city park and the statue erected to honor fighting men from Fremont county who served during World War I. The Davis boys learned how to swim in the river here.

8. St. Anthony's third Hospital, at the corner of Bridge Street and East 3rd South near the river, was considered a modern facility when Twila and Tamara were born in there, 1948 and 1950, respectively.

9. The **Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle** was the central religious and cultural gathering place for local Mormons. From the time it was built in 1911, several generations of Davis, Hall, and Birch families attended stake conferences, Sunday church services, weekday auxiliary meetings, weddings, funerals, and countless social gatherings here. Located at the corner of Bridge Street and East Third South, it was torn down in 1966 to make room for a new freeway.

10. Lincoln School, constructed in 1907 on the corner of Bridge Street and East 5th South on the south side of the river, was a 2-story building with a bell in the large belfry. Mom attended first through fifth grade here. Dad attended here only during 4th grade (He was in the same class as Mom) when his own school, Central School, on the north side of town was temporarily overcrowded. Lincoln School was torn down in 1966.

11. The **David and Nancy Birch home** at 153 West 6th South was the residence of Mom's maternal grandparents from1911 to 1957. The home served as the "town" residence for the Birches, who split their time between their ranch two miles south of St. Anthony and the town home, which was closer to church and schools

12. The **Jick and Ruby Hall home** had been seriously fire-damaged when Jick purchased it in 1927. A skilled carpenter, he renovated and improved the house. Mom lived here from age eleven until her marriage to Dad in 1937, when she was twenty-one. (In 1937, the Halls built a home on the Teton highway just outside the St Anthony city limits then later moved to a farm in Twin Groves where they lived during most of Dad and Mom's years at the Davis ranch. They made their final move to Ogden, Utah, in December



"We had previously sold our home in St. Anthony.
I invested the proceeds on the modest frame home
at 371 W. 2nd S. in lovely Cache Valley.
I truly have enjoyed this location and firmly believe that it
became an answer to prayers in our behalf.
Life and living at this address has been wonderful.
Surely problems have arisen, but all in all,
I'm not sorry that Thelma and I made this major move."[1]

An early (perhaps 1952) photo of our home at 371 West 2nd South in Logan. Our property extended back to the center of the block. We planted an immense garden on the back portion. As was customary during our first years in Logan, we had our "water turn" once a week, which allowed us to flood-irrigate our garden and back lawn using water supplied by ditches branching off of the Logan Canal. In the summer, splashing in the water on the flooded grass was an irresistible weekly treat.

The front door of our home opened into a large front room. As you walked through it, the kitchen was visible through an open doorway on the far end and Mom and Dad's bedroom was to the right. Their bedroom had a big window, which looked out onto the front porch (visible in this photo). Incredibly, access to the home's only bathroom was through Mom and Dad's bedroom! With seven (and soon to be ten) people in the house, you can bet Dad remedied that situation as soon as he could by sacrificing some of their precious bedroom space to build a small hallway to the bathroom. That solved the privacy issue for Mom and Dad but didn't diminish our sometimes raucous fights over bathroom rights.

The full basement, accessed through a door in the kitchen down steep, wooden steps with no hand rail, served many purposes: it included a bedroom shared by LaVel, Brent, and Brian; it sported a "fruit room" with shelves to store Mom's umpteen bottles of fruits, vegetables, and meats; and it housed Mom's wash room where her two-tubbed washer and wringer were put to frequent use. The corner drain for the washer hose did double duty when Dad built a rudimentary shower around it for the boys to use. (They also used it for unauthorized purposes when they didn't want to trek upstairs to use the bathroom). Next to the washing machine was a large, coal furnace with its adjoining coal storage room. The boys were responsible for hauling out the furnace's carbonized "clinkers." And finally, the basement also included a room designated as Dad's "gun room," where he stored his guns and cast his own shells.

The upstairs (second story) consisted of only two large rooms — an attic and a large bedroom with an inverted V-slanted ceiling produced by the house's roofline. The bedroom was initially shared by Twila and Tamara but later occupied as well by the younger children: Lauris, Debra and Duane. We slept in two double beds and fought over who got to sleep by the room's single window (seen in the top photo).

(For Lauris' memories of our Logan home, see note #2 in Chapter Notes in the back of this book under "Early Logan Years.")

Chapter Seven

Early Logan Years

1952-1966

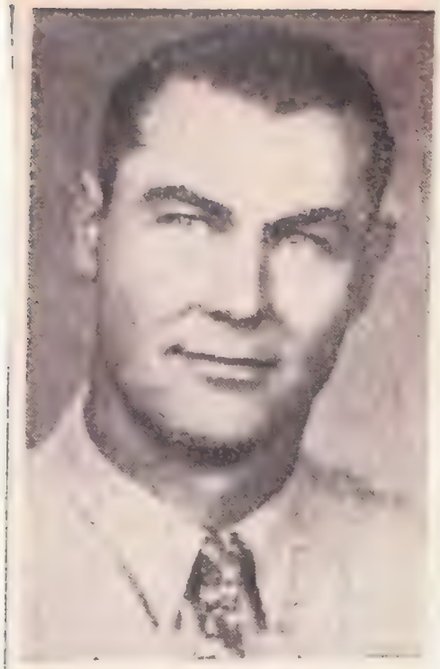
As LaVel and Brent approached their teens, became more independent, and developed questionable friendships, Dad re-evaluated the environment in which we were being raised and decided to make some drastic changes.

Though Dad and Mom had deep roots in the St. Anthony area and most of their extended families lived nearby, Dad decided a move was necessary for our future well-being. Mom wrote: ." . . *he* [Versal] *suddenly decided that St. Anthony was not where he wanted to raise our family! I was surprised; I was busy, contented, happy. Sure, some of our own friends did not live the Word of Wisdom; true, our sons had many non-Mormon friends, and worse — some were from militantly "Jack-Mormon" families. And I had to agree that it would be hard to help our children get formal educations from there. So, in 1952, after 2 trips along the Wasatch Front surveying "ideal towns," we selected Logan, Utah, and moved here with our 3 sons and 2 little daughters."*[3]

The transition from St. Anthony to Logan took many months and involved periods of family separation. After settling on Logan as the place he and Mom wanted to live, Dad obtained temporary employment at an autobody shop there in late July 1951, while the rest of us remained in St. Anthony.[4] He immediately began searching for a house to rent, one our family could live in until our St. Anthony home was sold, but his search was in vain.[5] And without equity from our old home we couldn't purchase a new one in Utah, so after a few weeks of family separation, Dad and Mom decided to postpone the Logan move until better arrangements could be made. On Aug. 13 Mom signed a new teaching contract for the 1951-52 school year[6] and Dad returned to St. Anthony, where he worked in his brother, Floyd's machine shop for a few months.[7]

By the following spring plans finally fell into place and our transition to Logan began in earnest. In March our home at 347 West Main Street sold for $8500, giving Dad and Mom $5125 in equity.[8] We immediately moved into the "Vet's Units" (#13) further west on Main Street, apartments built by the U.S. government to provide affordable housing for World War II veterans, but open to others (us), too.[9] For the next two months, until school was out, we resided in the low income housing. On May 1, 1951, Dad again traveled to Logan and began his new job as service manager at Transport Motor Company. He moved into a home he had purchased for $7000, with $3000 down, and lived there alone for a month spending weekdays working and evenings planting a garden and fixing up the house. Each weekend he drove 200 miles back to St. Anthony to spend time with the family. Finally, on the last weekend in May, with a loaded trailer in tow, we all left St. Anthony for good and moved into our Logan home at 371 West Second South together.[11]

Lauris' Birth



VERSAL L. DAVIS

New Service Manager Is Announced

New service manager at Transport Motor Company, Logan, is Versal L. Davis, who has been residing in St. Anthony, Idaho, it was announced today by Harry H. Simmons, manager of the local firm.

Appointment was made May 1. For the past two years, Mr. Davis has been with Fremont Motor Company in St. Anthony.

A native of St. Anthony, he worked his apprenticeship with Economy Motors of that city, and then became service manager for Idaho Auto Body Company, in the same community. He has been active in the scouting movement, having served as district commissioner and as scoutmaster.

Mr. and Mrs. Davis are parents of five children. The family has bought a home in Logan, at 371 West Second South.

"I feel that our service department has been strengthened to an even greater extent by the appointment of Mr. Davis," commented Mr. Simmons.

"Ever since our establishment, we have consistently tried to build up this department, and we are proud of the job we're doing. We welcome Mr. Davis into our organization, and invite our friends to investigate the high-quality work done by our service department."



Above: Lauris Hall Davis, fourth son and sixth child in our family, was born on 9 Feb. 1953, photo February 1953. Doing a little math, I calculate Lauris was our family's transition child. He bridged the gap between St. Anthony and Logan — conceived in one, born in the other. I was five when Lauris was born and vividly recall his hair! So much of it! And so dark! I was delighted beyond words to have a real live doll to play with. I'm sure I mauled him to death.

Left: The announcement of Dad's new job in Logan's daily newspaper, *The Herald Journal*, 1 May 1951. Of this turning point in job & location, Dad wrote: *"Eventually Thelma and I decided that our growing family needed the solidarity and conducive environment of a stronger church community. So these desires finally crystallized in our searching for such a place. We investigated opportunities as far south as Provo, Utah. Finding a job was no problem anywhere but living quarters were somewhat different. However, after several months of indecision, we chose Logan, Utah as our new place of residence. I accepted a foremanship position in the DeSoto-Plymouth dealership* [Transport Motor Company].[12]

Brent remembers a tense incident for Dad at the auto dealership: *When my dad first arrived in Logan, he went to work as an auto body man at one of the local auto dealerships. I guess he liked that job, although it didn't seem like much to me since he spent all his time sanding, pounding out dents, and painting cars. Most of the guys Dad worked with seemed okay, however, except that once he found that a number of his tools were disappearing. Checking around, he found a couple of what appeared to be his tools on another guy's workbench. When he confronted the guy about it, the guy apparently became pretty huffy, claiming that the tools had been his for years. He almost got away with it until my dad showed him, and the shop foreman, the 'V' (for Versal) he had ground into his tools when he first bought them. The guy backed down pretty quickly and ended up going somewhere else to work.*[13]


Logan Stake M.I.A. Dance

Left to right, standing, are Don McPherson, Lee Edwards, Versal Davis, Thema Davis, Bonnie Edwards, Jane Reading, Jane Sargent, Ardella Baugh, Gwen Fredman, Hazel [illegible], Harold Balling, Ross Covington, Everett Harris and Bishop Allen Meikle, members of Logan Stake MIA Board and officials of Logan First Ward. Seated are dancers from the First Ward who will do the original numbers in the Logan Stake Gold [illegible] tonight at 8 p.m. in the Logan Senior High school gym.

This article from *The Herald Journal* publicized the **Logan Stake Dance Festival,** which was held in the Logan High School gymnasium on Friday, 13 May 1955. **Dad and Mom were the Logan First Ward Dance directors at the time.** They are on the back row, third and fourth from the left. Brent is seated on the floor in the front, fourth from the right.[14]

Identification of the Logan First Ward teens in the photo was made by Mom, who penciled their names onto the news article. Girls, left to right: 1. JoAnn Blazer, 2. Linda Winterholler, 3. _____, 4. Cheryll Blackburn, 5. Carolyn Simpson, 6. Julia Webb (Brent's longtime flame), 7. Lynne Rigby, 8. Vivian Haderlie, 9. Pat Meickle, 10. Marie Hammond, 11. Sharon Richardson, and 12. Deanna Fonnesbeck. Boys, left to right: 1. _____, 2. Steve Karren, 3. _____, 4. Roy Frodsham, 5. David Kemp, 6. Kip Thorne, 7. _____, 8. Kent Bishop, 9. Brent Davis, 10. D.J. Broadbent, and 11. Norman Squires.

Dance Instructors

In an activity Dad termed "enjoyable,"[15] he and Mom served as ward dance directors for many years both in St. Anthony and Logan. This was during an era when dance instruction was a regular part of the mutual curriculum.

Mom and Dad helped refine the social skills of hundreds of budding adults during the 50s and early 60s. Both loved to dance; they enjoyed the social interaction with others — especially the young adults; and they were exemplary instructors. Beginning in July 1963, they were called as stake dance directors[16] and began conducting weekly Monday evening classes at the new Logan Stake Center on the corner of 4th West and 1st South.[17] (This was before Monday nights were officially set aside by the Church for family home evening.) They produced elaborate floorshow numbers for the yearly stake Gold and Green Ball.[18]



A Logan First Ward mutual dance practice, ca. 1964. That's me (Twila) on the front right, dancing with Brent Jones. I remember the weekly dance practices on mutual nights as being awkward but exciting. They prefaced our ward's annual "Gold and Green Ball" each year, which was attended by adults and teens alike. There we would demonstrate our newly acquired dance and social skills.

My Scouting Years

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 32)

In about 1943 I was asked to become the scoutmaster of Troop #51 of the St. Anthony 1st Ward. This appointment ushered in an era of boy scouting activity which covered many phases and many years.

In somewhat chronological order, I served first as scoutmaster in the St. Anthony 1st Ward, then Explorer Advisor of the same ward. From 1948 to 1952 I served on the Fremont District Scout Committee. Immediately after arriving in Logan, Utah I was appointed scoutmaster of Troop #2 of the Logan 1st Ward. I served in that position for about four years then was appointed as Logan District Commissioner of Scouting. In this capacity I remained for three years until the Cache Valley Council was reorganized. Since that time I have been registered as a troop committeeman, constantly, until Thelma and I went on our mission in 1980. This has represented a total of about 38 years service.

During these many years I, of course, worked with many boys and also adult leaders. These were rewarding years filled with activity, training, teaching and camping.

I was required, in St. Anthony, to accompany my troop to Treasure Mtn. Camp of the Tetons. This beautiful encampment took place on three successive years. During this time I was given the special name of Chief Clear Lake, by which I was known during these week-long camping periods. In the second year at this camp I joined a few other scouts and scouters as we hiked to the summit of South Mountain of the Grand Tetons. Eagle Pass rests between South Mountain and the Grand Teton. (I insert here that while on these campouts I left the handling of the ranch to Thelma. She willingly milked the cows with mechanical milkers, irrigated, and otherwise took care of things at home. I'll always be deeply appreciative of her efforts at this time.)

LaVel and Brent started in scouting while we lived in St. Anthony. They later, in Logan, received their Eagle awards as did I at the same time. I've always felt that Brian, Lauris and Duane were somewhat left out because I could not spend the individual attention in later years. However, they did participate in scouting and received several advancements.



Versal, when he received his eagle scout award at a court of honor in the Logan Tabernacle, 1955[19]

As a result of my scouting activity I also acquired the coveted "Scouter's Award" and the "Scoutmaster's Key." In addition to these I attained the "Deseret Recognition Award" that was issued by the L.D.S. Church. The 20-year service award was presented to me but I've not applied for any succeeding tenure awards.

These many, many years have verified the prediction in my patriarchal blessing that I would spend a great deal of time working with and assisting youth. I sincerely hope that I've been helpful to these young men as they have grown and developed. In later years I have felt a need to associate with older people. Therefore, my attention has been directed more as a gospel doctrine teacher. Both eras have been timely and very rewarding though sometimes difficult.

It is interesting to note that as I spent these many years working with boys that Thelma was directing the affairs of many young women. Church activity was the motivating force behind both of our obligations in this respect.

I should add, also, that the finest men I've had the privilege of associating with were found doing about the same thing that I was. They were donating their time and efforts toward the molding of young lives into future leaders in their own right.

It Was Cold!

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 82)

I was camped with my troop of boy scouts. We were in the mountains south and east of Logan. A small creek ran by our tent area. This was a winter camp and I was teaching the boys how to provide for themselves in cold weather. All had gone quite well and we had cooked supper, cleaned camp, and retired for the night.

I had demonstrated ways to keep warm even though their equipment was somewhat minimal. The boys slept within a walled tent but I simply prepared my sleeping bag and ground cloth and placed them near the creek, which was bubbling by.

I knew the weather was cold and was becoming even colder, but all seemed to be well. When daylight came I was very surprised to see water from the creek flowing immediately beside my sleeping bag. The weather had been so cold that the waters of the creek had frozen and created an ice jam!

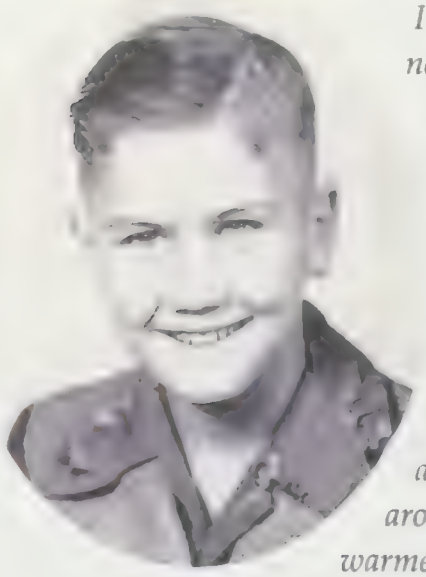
I rushed to the tent. The boys were all curled up and sleeping peacefully. I was grateful. My training had helped in seeing these young men through the cold night.

Note: During this same night Brent and a friend of his slept in their sleeping bags as they were completely surrounded by snow in the form of a tunnel [a snow cave] about a mile from where I spent the night with the troop. They had, of course, learned how to do this during earlier campouts.

Additional note: The weather service reported that the temperature during this campout had dropped to forty degrees below zero! Preparedness saved us!

Brent recorded his own memories of this "Klondike" camping experience. There are a few discrepancies but he adds interesting details:

A trip we went on, which proved a valuable learning and survival experience, was when several of us older explorer scouts went winter camping up Blacksmith Fork Canyon just east of Hyrum. We were several miles into the canyon and it was the middle of the winter, pretty cold. As it happened, my dad also had Scout Troop 2 (about a dozen younger kids) up there too, about a hundred yards from where we were. The scouts camped in a grove of trees, and we older (tougher) guys camped in an open field (I have no idea why). Anyway, we all dug snow caves and built a fire, tried to cook some food on a miserable fire and then went to bed. We didn't spend much time around the campfire that evening since it was just too cold.



Brent, 1951

I slept pretty well but was never really warm and comfortable (which was normal for winter camping) and was glad to get up the following morning. At daylight I decided it was just too cold to lay around in a sleeping bag any longer and that getting up and around would get me warmer. I guess it did, since I looked in D. J. Broadbent's snow cave (who got up earlier than I did), I saw that he had been sleeping on a bed of ice. He didn't have the sense to put any evergreen boughs or anything else underneath his sleeping bag, which was partially frozen to the floor of his cave.

By then, the others of our group were getting up, and we were all looking forward to having something warm to eat. We had trouble getting a fire going, but even worse, we found that all our food was frozen solid. Our eggs were frozen. Our water was frozen. Our canned soup was frozen. Everything liquid was now solid, except for . . . (get ready for this) . . . our maple syrup! Seeing that we were going to have a tough time getting a fire going, fixing breakfast, and just staying warm, we resorted to drinking maple syrup out of the bottle. Of course, it too was pretty slow flowing from the cold, but it sure warmed us up! Almost straight sugar does wonders! The only other thing we had to eat was peanuts.

In a while, we, having given up on breakfast and all, spent the rest of the day snowshoeing all over the place, subsisting on maple syrup and peanuts.

Generally, the trip was okay, all things considered, but in talking to my dad after we returned home, I found that it had been 27 below zero that night, a record for that time of year. Frankly, I was surprised that none of us had frostbite. As a matter of fact, my dad got no sleep that night at all since he had to keep a good fire going all night long. He literally had to drag his scout troop out of their sleeping bags periodically, one at a time, and sit them by the campfire to keep them from freezing to death. Many were virtually unconscious from the cold in their sleeping bags. I recall that he was somewhat shaken by that experience, knowing that he was the only person keeping some of those kids alive.

Down the Snake

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 35)

Thelma and I moved to Utah in the spring of 1952. Because of my scouting activities, I became associated with key individuals who also were spending much time with boys.

This interaction brought about my being asked to join a select group of boys and leaders who expected to float about 30 miles of the rugged Snake River near Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This was to be a first of its kind so far as the Cache Valley Council was concerned.

I accepted the invitation and I also enrolled LaVel and Brent as members of the group. There were about 28 boys of explorer age and 7 adult leaders. Wallace Parrish was appointed to be skipper and Herman Hauser was to be his assistant. I was a unit leader among the boys.

This expedition involved the use of several large rubber rafts and the necessary equipment needed to use them. Fishing gear was a must for those, such as I, who wished to try the choice holes along the route.

We launched our rafts on the Snake about five miles below the dam which creates Jackson Reservoir. The route downriver proceeded until we reached the area called "the Cottonwoods." This body of water is fast in many areas with dangerous undertows and hidden snags. But it threads through beautiful alpine country replete with meadows, mountains, trees and willows. Wildlife was occasionally seen near the river banks. Birds were found in profusion, especially ducks, geese, and swans.

It was always necessary to beware of the dangers involved. At one time, one of the boats snagged on a submerged tree limb. This tore a side on one of the rafts, which immediately dumped the occupants and gear. The boys and leader were safe with life jackets supporting them but most of the camping gear was lost. A valuable camera was also lost. Other boats rescued the crew and then together all continued the float downstream.

This first expedition had its thrills and will always be remembered by those who went. Each individual

Explorers Run The Mighty Snake

There's been a colony of Cache Valley men and lads becoming river boating addicts.

One man put it this way: "I love to hike in the mountains. But boating — that's the real sport. There's high excitement, as when you hit the rapids, then it is serenity in drifting along with the current. Amid beauty unsurpassed.

"River boating gets into your blood."

Explorer Scouts from the Cache County this week returned from the annual Snake River expedition "in great shape." For some of the original scouts who made the trip, which had been postponed once because of adverse weather and river conditions.

Skipper Versal Davis reported that this year's trip had all of the "thrills and chills" of former expeditions.

"The boys behaved well and got a splendid idea of running this dangerous river," he said. "The water in the Snake was low, but it still was quite a task to travel its course in our rubber boats.

"We had ten Scouts who have taken their Scout training seriously, and it was a pleasure to travel the river with them."

The expedition left Logan by [illegible] and was on the river by noon. After entering upon the river at Moose, Wyoming their course led them thirty miles down river to the Wyoming

(Continued on Page 7)

This *Herald Journal* news article reported on the 1956 explorer river trip.[21] In the continuation of the article (not included here) the report tells that at the conclusion of the float the boys expressed their appreciation for Dad and several other men by throwing them into the river. The good natured horseplay was typical of the fun enjoyed by the explorers and their leaders.



"BARRELING DOWN" the Snake River during [illegible] and Kip Thorne, junior second mate-s'eet. [illegible] Council's annual expedition [illegible] Versal Davis, skipper for the trip, Gunnell, [illegible] Thorne, while in the background with his [illegible] is D. J. Breaufeat. Forty-nine mile trip.



The designated leaders for the following year's 1957 River trip were publicized in Logan's newspaper, *The Herald Journal*, summer 1956. Back row, left to right: Ray Ramsbottom, Herman Hauser, and Versal Davis, . Front: Woodrow Winward, and Dr. Don Gunnell.

was given a charter member patch to wear on his uniform.

The following year, Herman Hauser served as skipper and I was skipper on the third consecutive trip.

An amusing incident occurred on the 3rd cruise. I was paired with a Logan dentist by the name of Dr. Don Gunnell. Our association had been splendid as we conducted the affairs of the float. One evening we stopped to set up camp along a suitable stretch of river bank. Tents were pitched, fires were soon burning brightly, and all units were well and accounted for. So, Don and I proceeded to prepare our own supper. He prepared paper plates and improvised a rough table. I cooked supper; fried potatoes with onions was our main fare. I applied pepper and then shook salt upon the pan of goodies. Soon all was ready to eat. We offered a blessing then proceeded to devour our prepared meal.

Don took a generous supply of potatoes then offered some to me, which I took. He thrust his fork into a cluster of potatoes and then placed this into his mouth. He started chewing industriously then closed his mouth in obvious discomfort as he peered at me. Not knowing his problem, I simply took a generous bite of potatoes, also. Immediately I reacted the same as he.

Why?? Well, in preparing the potatoes, I had mistakenly used the powdered soap container instead of the one holding the salt! We laughed and laughed about it.

My "Rescue"

(Flashback)

It happened on Easter Sunday [April 1, 1956]. We, as a family, had decided to go on a picnic. This was to take place up the left-hand fork of Blacksmith Fork Canyon. This is a rugged but beautiful area about ten miles east of Hyrum, Utah. A small mountain stream cascades down the canyon and a common dirt road parallels the waterway.

So we drove up to the spot which seemed best for a fire and picnic. This location was about two miles from the main road that goes up Blacksmith Fork Canyon.

After arriving, we assembled our various food and equipment articles, enjoyed a typical lazy afternoon together and then just enjoyed the crisp mountain air. The kids went various ways around the camp area and Mom and I gave little heed.

When we felt it was time to leave we gathered our gear together and called for all the kids. All soon appeared except Brent. Brian said that Brent started up the side of the mountain which rose in the west. Still unconcerned, we waited for his return. But no Brent. I talked the matter over with Thelma and it was decided that I would simply climb part way up the mountain and locate Brent.

"I'll climb up right over there. You hang a piece of clothing from this bush where I can see it from above if Brent returns before I do," I told Thelma as I indicated a certain large willow bush next to the car. If I failed to find Brent, I was, of course, to note the bush now and then to learn if he had or had not returned.

So I proceeded to ascend the steep mountain. Periodically, I would glance at the camp and especially the selected bush. No cloth of any kind! So I kept climbing. Still no sign at camp.

I looked up at the mountain and realized that if Brent were ahead of me he would have had to go south a ways then up again. This was necessary to get around a perpendicular ledge of rocks, which extended north for two or three miles. I was now becoming really concerned for Brent's safety. Intermittent snow and night were coming on.

I keenly searched for a telltale sign on the bush, which was now far below. Still no indication that he had entered camp. I wondered what I should do. I hesitated to proceed; yet I hated to return empty-handed to the car. So soberly I continued my climb

hoping to see Brent soon or at least come upon his tracks in the deepening snow.

Darkness soon enveloped everything as I climbed above the high, precipitous ledge and then plodded north. Several times I tried to descend but the vertical ledge foiled my attempts. After stumbling along in the darkness for about two hours I knew I was temporarily trapped and had better plan on remaining until morning.

Far below me I could see an occasional flash of car lights as autos threaded back and forth along the road. I felt these, no doubt, were there because of me. But, in the blackness of night and trapped as I was, I knew I must prepare suitable protection from the cold and the knee-deep snow.

I had a light jacket and a few matches — kept for the picnic fire — were in my pocket.

Finding a somewhat level place, I kicked a body-sized opening in the snow. I pulled some green pine boughs from nearby trees and lined the excavation. Then, to protect myself from exposure to the cold, I built a fire of dry limbs. I divided the fire so a small section was located on each side of the bed site. I gathered extra limbs for use to keep the two fires burning during the night.

During this all-night endurance test I was fraught with disturbing thoughts: Where was Brent? Had he suffered an accident and was lying helplessly somewhere? What about Mom and the rest of the family? How would I find Brent when daylight came? Would I even survive?

Many times during the long night I prayed with a sincerity that I'd never felt before. Deity must have heard me because I was able to rest and sleep, though intermittently. I experienced great need for moral support and I was rewarded, I'm sure.

After what seemed an eternity, daylight finally sent faint rays through the trees. I had made up my mind to descend and learn what I could. Before leaving my haven of rest I walked to the edge of the cliff. I had made my pine bough bed within ten feet of the sharp drop-off ledge!! I had not known, previous to this, that I was so close to disaster.

Buttoning up my jacket, I continued north along the cliff edge trying to find a place where I could descend. But again, as during the evening before, I was confined to the top of the ledge.

After perhaps two miles of trudging, I found a narrow exit opening. This I tried and soon I half-stumbled and half-slid to a long ridge which I knew would lead downward to the road still far below.

Glancing southward I could see several individuals climbing another ridge which was parallel to mine. I supposed they were looking for Brent or perhaps me. However, I continued the long descent until I reached the road.

Doggedly tired I stumbled toward where I'd left Thelma and the kids the evening before. Again I saw and heard others as they searched the side of the mountain upon which I had spent the night.

Soon I could see the camp area, but my car was missing! A county sheriff's car was there, instead. A fire was burning over which a coffee pot was hanging. Two or three men were around the open fire.

I soon covered the distance to where they were and walking up to the closest individual, I said, "Did the boy get in?"

The man glanced at me, then ignored me.

I instantly became furious and grasping the front of the deputy sheriff's coat, I again said, "I asked you a question; did the boy come back?"

Irritated, he asked, "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm his dad. Now answer me!" I quickly replied.

Another man across the fire said, as he ran for his car, "Oh my gosh, where's my camera?" He was a newspaperman.

Then the deputy regained his composure and informed me that Brent had returned to camp and that he was OK.

I took a deep breath and silently expressed my gratitude to a divine protector.

Soon I was riding toward Logan and passing several cars laden with search parties. I had caused quite a stir and now I was a celebrity.

A brief recap of the action which had taken place after I left camp is this:

Brent had returned shortly after I left and Thelma had placed her white slip upon the bush but somehow I was unable to see it.

After darkness had set in she drove quickly to Logan, told Wally Parrish about matters, and asked if he would help. He immediately contacted the sheriff's department and then notified the Cache Valley Boy Scout Council..

Soon search parties were being mustered. Even the local high school dismissed classes to allow boys to join in the search. The Kiwanis Club was soon making arrangements. The deputy sheriff was at the scene to direct. Many of my work associates assisted.

All in all there were around three hundred people organized for the search.

One interesting account is that one of the scout exec-itives, a personal friend of mine, was joined by LaVel nd Brent as they spent the night climbing the same nountain. They had actually carried a stretcher to the ummit.

It seems almost incredible that I threaded my way lown the mountain and was not recognized.

One statement was made by a close friend and working companion, Reed Johnson. I treasure what he said when he addressed several of the searchers: "If anyone can survive in those mountains, I'm sure 'Old Verse' can."

In his own memoirs Brent wrote that after exploring the cliffs for an hour or two on that Easter Sunday, he had headed back down the mountain but threw his left arm out of joint doing so. It popped back in again but he was in a lot of pain after that. When rescuers gathered to look for Dad, Brent, with his aching arm, led them back up the cliffs in the darkness using flashlights, in an all-night search. About noon the next day the searchers decided to regroup and refresh themselves. Brent wrote:

"The group I was with then decided that we'd all best hike back down, get something to eat, and get a proper search organized. I was really tired by the time we got back down to the bottom. I'd been up that mountain twice and had had no sleep or anything to eat during the night and my arm was pretty sore. When we arrived at the picnic site, there was my dad sitting by the fire eating and joking with my mom and some of the search and rescue guys he knew, and talking to a Herald Journal reporter. Everything was calm and collected, except for the hundred or so people still up on the mountain looking for him.[22]



Newspaper photos taken at the rescue scene in Blacksmith Fork Canyon, *Herald Journal*, 3 April 1956.

In the top one, Dad is in the middle. In the bottom one he's third from the right, with LaVel standing to his right and Brent in the middle with his back to the camera.

Someone had driven us younger children home late that night so we could go to bed. I remember my intense anxiety waiting for word, which didn't come until later the next day. Huge, wonderful relief!



Debra's Birth

Debra joined our family on 30 May 1956, the month following Dad's "rescue" in Blacksmith Fork Canyon. When she was ten Deb wrote concerning her birth in her *Book of Remembrance*:

As far as I can remember of my life's history is that I was born on May 30, 1956 in Logan, Utah at the Logan L.D.S. Hospital. The doctor was W. H. Hayward. My mother already had 6 children when I was born. My daddy was born in St. Anthony, Idaho and my mother was born in Gridly, California. I was the 7th one born in the family, and had four brothers and two sisters at that time. I was born between nine and ten o'clock in the morning. I weighed 8 pounds and 11 ozs. I was 21 inches long. I was rather taller than most babies would be but my whole family were born tall. My mother and father had always liked the name Debra so they decided to select that name for me.[23]

Mom wrote about the "help" she received from all of us with baby Debra in a letter to LaVel, who had just joined the Air Force and was in basic training at the time of her birth:

Your new little sister is doing just fine. She has a good appetite, sleeps good, and is growing fast. We're all enjoying her. Brent has tended her a couple of evenings and seems to do fine with her. I surely had a time getting Twila and Tammy to let her sleep, though. If she even wiggles a toe, they pick her up and bring her into the front room declaring that she was awake or fussing.[24]

Debra, about 18 months old, hangs out with Mom and Dad as he peruses a hunting magazine, early fall 1957.





Left. **LaVel married Colleen Olsen on 12 Sept. 1956** following basic training in the Air Force. They moved to Connecticut for a year where Vel studied Chinese and radio, then he shipped overseas to do intelligence work on an island off the coast of Korea and Colleen came back to Logan where she lived in a small trailer house parked at the side of our home until he returned. Their first child (and Mom and Dad's first grandchild), Corrette, was born while Vel served in Korea. She was born 4 Feb. 1958.

Mom and Dad's social and gospel study group, which they were a part of for many years during the fifties. Photo 1957.

In a letter to LaVel, in the Air Force, dated 9 July 1956, Mom wrote: *"We're (our study group) going to study the guide our missionaries use in the mission field. It's supposed to be a very good, condensed version of our gospel and a way to explain it to outsiders. If you like, I'll send you some of the material. But maybe your chaplain already has it and you'll have access to it."*[25]

On the back of this photograph Mom identified names of those in the photo with corresponding numbers written on the front: 1. Von Everton, 2. Don MacPherson, 3. Gilbert Saunders, 4. Carrie Saunders, 5. Treva Parrish, 6. Wallace Parrish, 7. Evelyn Marler, 8. _____, 9. Herman Hauser, 10. Reed Marler, 11. Donald Dobson, 12. Versal Davis (wearing his St. Anthony fireman's shirt), 13. Colleen Davis (LaVel's wife, who participated as a guest while he served in Korea), 14. Nelda MacPherson, 15. Donna Everton, 16. Scharlene Dobson, 17. Thelma Davis, and 18. Blanche Hauser.

Custom mill ships most of its work out

The Herald Journal, Sun. 25 March 1984

This is where Versal worked for almost 30 years, where Laurie worked during his college days, where Duane now works.



Herald Journal

Ace S. Raymond (left) and Everett Harris.

By Edith Morgan
staff writer

Ace Mill and Fixtures has had a reputation for doing quality architectural woodwork since it was founded in 1945, and is proud of its fine finished product and its skilled craftsmen.

The partners in the business, Ace S. Raymond and Everett Harris, first met when they were students at Utah State University and worked on an NYA building project together.

When Harris came out of the service after World War II, Raymond suggested that they go into business together. The arrangement has worked well ever since. Raymond provides the capital outlay and Harris figures the plans, does the bidding and oversees the construction.

Most of the millwork is shipped out of Cache Valley into other parts of Utah and surrounding states as far away as California, Texas and Alaska.

"All work is done on a contract basis and 95 percent of our work is a result of a low bid," Harris said. "We work in the commercial field and do not encourage walk-in-trade."

The capabilities of the mill include complete project estimating, designing and drafting as well as field measurments, delivery and installation. "From the initial planning to final inspection of the installed product, we work with the architect and general contractor through all phases of a building project," Harris said.

"The first and lasting impression of a building's interior depends upon the architectural millwork," Harris continued. "We work with plastics and hardwood and are also a project supplier to general contractors for all exposed interior woodwork, including rails and panels, wood doors, plastic laminates and hardwood trim."

The mill employs 26, many of them master craftsmen and others learning to become such workers. "These men take a job and stay with it from start to finish," Harris said. "We believe in the worker-product concept in which each cabinetmaker is involved in the total fabrication process of a cabinet unit from start to finish. We find that this gives our plant employees greater pride in the finished product and greater job satisfaction. This way we avoid many of the quality control and labor problems faced by factories using assembly line techniques."

Ace Mill is an associate member of General Contractors of America and a member of Architectural Woodwork Institute. Harris usually spends one day a week in Salt Lake City at the Utah Chapter of General Contractors where all the new jobs up for bidding in the Intermountain West are listed.

"We bid with the contractors. We are a subcontractor for architectural woodwork," Harris said. "The reason we stay in business is that we are a custom mill. Nearly every project we do is entirely different," he said. "We are able to do work to match the woodwork in old buildings as well as in new ones."

"It takes time and experience to get contractors to specify you on their bid," Harris went on. "We have a good reputation and are proud of work and workmen. Bruno Ingold, who oversees our shop, is as good as they come."

Most of the work from the mill is for churches, hospitals, schools and business places. At present the mill is working on furnishings for 10 churches, three of them about finished, only one of the 10 in Utah; five schools, two hospitals, Sunshine Terrace, the Lincoln County Courthouse in Wyoming, the Evanston, Wyo., library and a motel.

Above. **Ace Raymond (left) and Ev Harris, Dad's bosses at Ace Mill and Fixture Company**, 1984.[26] I realize this news article is thirty years ahead of the story here but that's how long Dad worked for these two men in what proved to be a mutually respectful and productive association. The article gives a good summary of Ace Mill's scope of products and services. Dad became one of the "master craftsmen" they proudly employed.

Ace Mill

Sometime before 1956 Dad quit working for Transport Motors and was hired at Ace Mill & Fixture Company in Logan. Thus began a career that lasted for the remainder of his working years and an association with a group of men with whom he enjoyed lifelong friendships.

He repaired construction equipment and welded but spent most of his time fine-finishing wood furniture: church benches, counters, and furnishings for churches, banks, and other commercial buildings.

In a letter to LaVel, who was newly married to his high school sweetheart, Colleen Olsen, and living in New Haven, Connecticut, Mom described Dad's consuming work schedule in November 1956:

.....Dad's loaded with work again as the shop has a contract to build a building and corrals for Cache Valley Breeders Association. Alot of the contract is for welding and it'll take your Dad at least 6 months to do it all. Then, too, the mill is to do alot of finishing for Ricks College and Daddy will have alot of finish work to do for that. Cache Valley Bank is planning to remodel and they told Ev [Harris, Mill manager] that they were watching some work Daddy is doing for the Scout Office, and if they liked it well enough, the mill would get the contract for their work. Daddy did the woodwork in the First National Bank this past summer. Anyway, you know your Dad is happiest when he is swamped with work, for then he doesn't worry.[27]



Dad, sitting in the operator's seat of Ace Construction Company's huge crane, 1956.

It Was a Blast

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 38)

Reed Johnson and I had been working for several weeks making component parts for a huge bullpen fence. We were cutting suitable holes n twenty-foot lengths of four-inch boiler tubing. The vork had been routine as we used acetylene torches to lo this.

"Hey. Davis, let's try something," Reed said.

Sensing some fun, I replied, "OK, Jonse, what?"

"Let's plug each end of this pipe then cut a small ıole near the center. We can then fill the pipe with ıcetylene."

"Yea, man, I speak to set 'er off," I replied.

We were doing this in the walled-off paint room, vhich attached to the main workshop of Ace Mill & ixture where several men worked. The main office vith other employees, including the owner, Ace Raymond, was nearby.

After plugging both ends of the large, long pipe vith rags, I then cut a small hole through which I directed ure acetylene gas, a highly explosive product. I let this enter for about sixty seconds. Then I lit the welding torch and walked to the pipe.

"OK. Jonse, here goes."

I placed the flame near the aperture...then ... BOOM! The roar was deafening. Dust fell in a thick cloud. Instantly a door flew open and men were trying to locate us in the room.

Ev Harris, the mill foreman, rushed to the phone to call for help. He was so excited he couldn't dial. Ace Raymond rushed from the office. A man from a service station across the street ran over.

Where were we?

We had rushed outside and were standing looking foolishly at each other.

No, the boss didn't fire us. He just noted that we were alright, then he grinned and left.

Below. Dad in his paint room at Ace Mill, ca. 1960s.
Lauris worked for 6 years at the mill. *"I remember going to eat lunch with Dad,"* he wrote. *"We would eat in 10 minutes and then each pick a bench and lay down for a 15-minute power nap. That was a daily ritual that everyone in the mill observed."*[28]



Sorry About That, Dave

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 83)

We were working on the construction site of a new addition to Utah State University. I was operating the old Link Belt Crane, assisting in erecting some steel work for a large building.

I had moved the crane into a vacant area and was momentarily awaiting more steel. David Nielson, one of the company construction foremen, drove his old model Plymouth car into the same general area. Here he stopped and left the car and went to a nearby group of men.

Dave was a very congenial, likeable man whom I admired a great deal. We knew each other very well and we had lots of fun together. Seeing the car and noting that it was in a perfect spot for some prankster endeavor, I struck upon an idea.



Gessel Nielson (left) and Reed Johnson, Dad's co-pranksters.

Seeing Reed Johnson walk by, I said, "Reed, hook that choker on Dave's front bumper. We'll have some fun."

Reed was all for tricks, too. I'd worked with him a long time and knew he would assist. I swung the boom over the car, lowered the lifting cable and Reed did as I asked.

I then pulled the proper lever; the line became taut; and then the front end of the auto began to rise from the ground.

"Take it up some more, Verse," Reed laughingly directed.

So I pulled some more on the lever and soon the car was in an almost vertical position. I set the brake and then simply got out of the crane.

"Hey, what are you two nutheads trying to do? Let that outfit back down." This came from Dave as he came running over to where Reed and I were standing. We were grinning as we looked at the unusual position of the hoisted vehicle.

"Get that down," Dave said again.

Reed and I pretended that we could not hear him. We knew that Dave did not dare to lower the car because

Reed Johnson maneuvers the crane to move a section of concrete wall into place for a new shopping center, ca. 1963.

ıe did not know how to operate the crane.

"One of these days I'll get even with you buz-
zards," he exclaimed as others came over to note his
rustration and dismay.

Gessel Nielson, Dave's brother, was laughing at
he situation.

"That's got to come down and fast," Dave threatened.

Then, as if by signal in response to what Dave just
said, a bolt, holding the bumper to the frame, broke.
The cable came loose and the auto crashed to the
ground creating a great deal of dust and noise.

"Now look what you've done." Dave excitedly
remarked as he ran to his shaken pride and joy.

Reed and I became the subjects of mirth as every-
body noted our embarrassment. I soberly walked to
the crane, released the brake and let the severed
bumper descend to the ground.

The car? Oh, yes, it was miraculously undamaged by the fall. However, I had to make repairs on my own time and at my own expense.

Of course, Dave enjoyed every minute of my labors.

Ace Raymond Mill Employees, 1966:

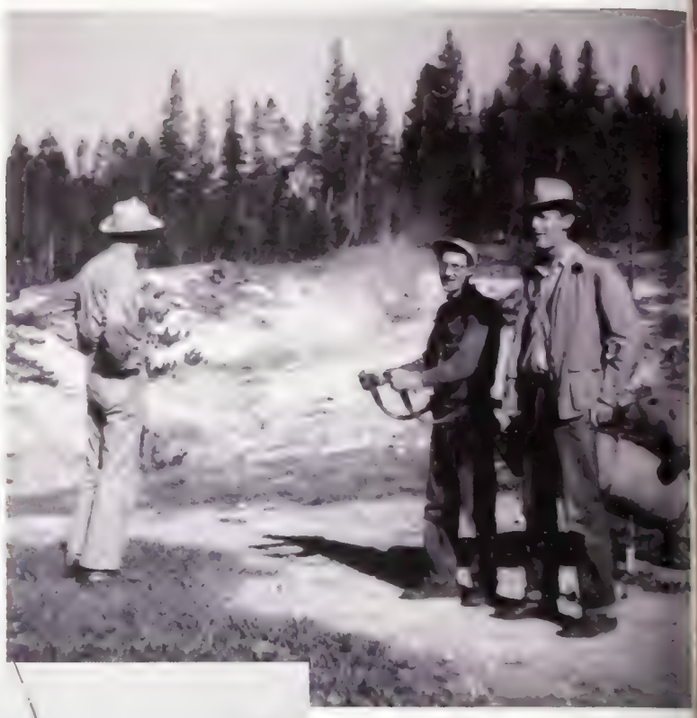
Back L-R: Russ Naylor, _____, Reidar Holman, Russ Williams, Reed Gessel?, Rod Wyberg, Versal Davis, and Bruno Ingold.

Front Row: Fred Schenk, far left, is the only one I could identify on this row.



Fishing for Seagulls

(Flashback. Journal II. p. 93)



One summer (1956), while working at Ace Mill, it was decided that six of us employed there would make a trip to Yellowstone Park. Fishing was our number one motive. So Ev Harris, Russ Williams, Russ Naylor, Bruno Ingold, Merrill Gessel, and I crowded into Merrill's car. We arrived at a point in the park where we left the car and shouldering our sleeping bags and fishing gear, and hiked inland to Heart Lake. Here we fished, stayed overnight, then returned to the car. We then drove to Yellowstone Lake. Here we had excellent luck as we caught many native cutthroats.

Russ Williams and I had been fishing together and had collected several nice ones. We were cleaning our catch and as we did so, we threw the insides to the many seagulls which abounded.



I watched these greedy birds as they darted here and there while picking up what we cast to them. A scheme was fermenting in my mind and after some additional thought, I said to Russ, "Hey, Russ, let's have some fun."

"We've had some fun, so what do you mean?" He replied.

"Well, you notice how these birds pick up every morsel we throw out there in the lake? Let's tie our lines to some of the guts and then cast them out there and see what happens."

"Davis, I think you have something there," he returned as he immediately prepared his casting rod.

I also grasped my spinning outfit, removed the hooks, and then securely tied a section of fish guts to the monofilament line. I cast this out into the lake and immediately a large seagull descended upon it.

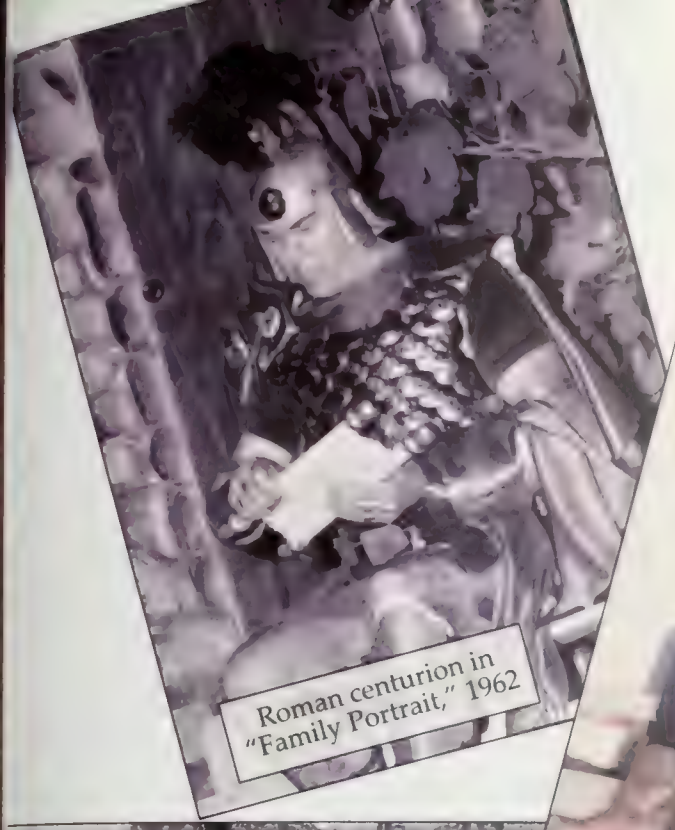
As the bird rose from the water my line began to unwind from the reel. I let the bird fly some distance during which it swallowed the lure. Then I set the brake!! This caused the unsuspecting seagull to flip a somersault. It quickly regained flight composure but was unable to proceed. It then regurgitated the mass of fish insides. This dropped downward as the frustrated bird flew away. However, another greedy gull dove for, and caught, the trick food supply.

Again, this same amusing action took place all over.

I was a man of about 45 years of age. I was playing boy's tricks. But, so what. I was enjoying the fun. Also, the seagulls were not being injured except, perhaps, their dignity.

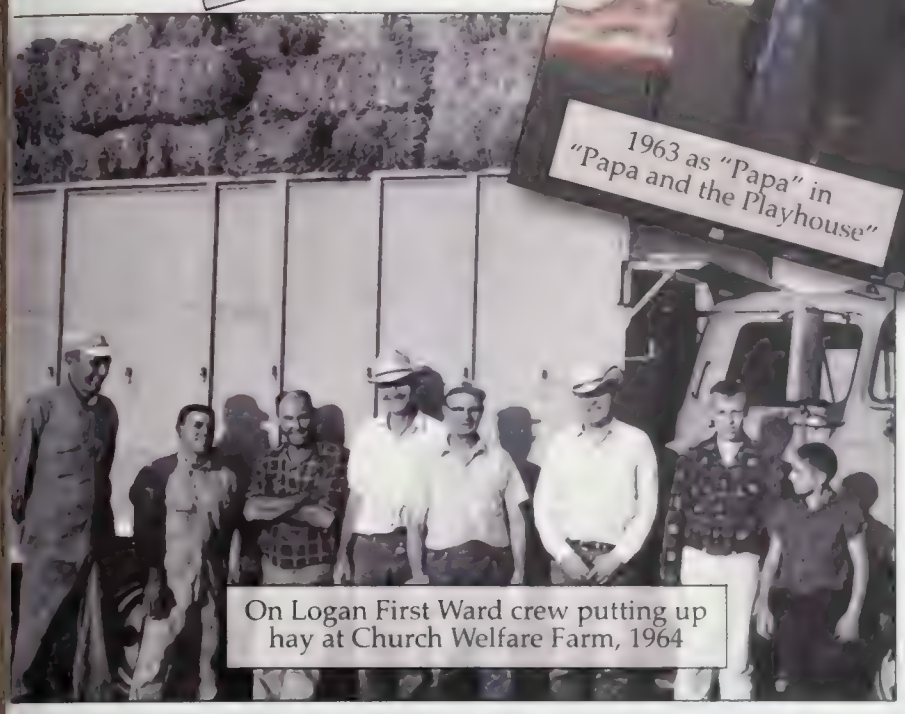


Photos this page: Dad and his Ace Mill buddies during their 1956 Yellowstone Park fishing trip.


Roman centurion in "Family Portrait," 1962


1963 as "Papa" in "Papa and the Playhouse"


1968 & 69 judge for Dairy Princess Pageant


On Logan First Ward crew putting up hay at Church Welfare Farm, 1964


As wicked King Noah in a 1959 First Ward production.


1958, as Moses in "Praise Ye The Lord"

Community Involvement

Dad was a social person and involved in many activities in addition to working and raising eight demanding children. As mentioned previously, Dad served in various capacities in the Boy Scout program for 38 years and served for a while as Cache Valley District Commissioner. But he donated his time in many other ways, too.

Dad had an impressive deep bass singing voice. He began performing when he was fourteen and sang at countless church services, funerals, civic functions, school events, and even political gatherings over the years. He was in the ward choir for many decades.

He enjoyed acting and performed in several major productions on a ward and stake level. He also loved playing the harmonica, an instrument he developed a fondness for as a young boy.

During election years Dad and Mom attended community Republican caucuses and served as election judges. And once, when they had left town on a long-planned-for trip to Alaska, they remembered after being on the road for an hour or so that it was election day. They returned to Logan to vote then headed back out again.[27]

For several years in the late 60s Dad participated in the Cache Valley Dairy Festival by serving as a judge for the Dairy Queen Pageant, a big deal in Logan in those days.

And he was ever ready to help on a community or church level with any worthy welfare or service need.

Bears and Newlyweds

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 60)

Mom and I, with our kids, were camped at Madison Junction in Yellowstone Park. We had our 9'X9' wall tent and were comfortably situated.

A car marked "Just Married" was parked in the spot next to us. A picnic table was between our parking areas.

The night before had been a somewhat noisy one as a large black bear went back and forth through the camps. It systematically searched the garbage cans as it travelled.

But morning found us OK. Thelma and I had cooked breakfast and served the kids. We had then cleaned up camp and were in the tent simply taking it easy.

We heard the newlyweds moving about as they prepared a sumptuous breakfast. Then a loud feminine scream!

I jumped to my feet and rushed outside the tent. Thelma and the kids followed

A large black bear was leaning against the table near the newlyweds' car. It was greedily helping itself to the goodies the couple had placed upon the table. In desperation they stood back, wringing their hands and "shooing" the bear. This was, of course, to no avail.

I looked over the situation and decided I would become a self-appointed hero. My half-filled canvas water bag was hanging from the limb of a nearby tree. I confidently walked over to it, removed the rope-attached bag, then strutted over to the bear. Its back and rear parts were toward me. I raised the heavy water-filled bag and then, with a mighty swing, I struck the bear on the hips.

Wow!! Instantly it emitted a loud roar and quickly turned, faced me, and bared its teeth. Standing on its rear legs it stood well above me. I was terrified!! Thoughts of being a hero immediately left me and I scampered away as fast as I could.

The bear grabbed a carton of eggs and moved about 20 feet away. While it was occupied with the eggs, I regained a little composure and told the newlyweds to grab their supplies and put them in their car. They did this as they simply piled everything in a heap on the floor. Then they hurriedly got in their car and drove away.

The bear returned, licked up a few remaining morsels, glanced over at me, then sauntered away.

The photos on these two pages were taken in August 1958 during the Yellowstone trip Dad describes in the Flashbacks on these two pages.

Mom and Dad had grown up in Yellowstone's "backyard," had spent parts of every summer in the park, and enjoyed continuing that tradition with us, the next generation of Yellowstone National Park lovers. We usually went late in the summer, towards the end of the season's crowds, heat, and most importantly, mosquitoes.





He Was Sociable

(Flashback. Journal II. p. 61)

This account is a sequel to the foregoing story. It occurred while on the same trip in Yellowstone Park.

I had decided that I would get in some fly fishing on the Firehouse River. This was south of Madison Junction and the road to it continued on to Old Faithful. Thelma and the kids elected to drop me off in the canyon area along the river; they would then drive on to Old Faithful.

So, early this day we set out, driving a few miles up the canyon. At a convenient parking area we stopped, I gathered my fishing gear, and bidding them goodbye, I went down the steep incline toward the river.

I heard some people yelling above me but I paid little attention. I came to the clear water of the river and waded almost to the middle of the rushing stream. At this point the water depth was up to my hips and to proceed farther I would have had to swim. So, I rigged up my fly rod and cast into the deeper water ahead of me. Almost immediately I had hooked a nice rainbow. Then still another. It was great fun as I caught several of these beauties.

Then I heard a commotion in the brush where I had come down the canyon wall. I peered over that way and observed a large bear emerge from the willows.

This animal stopped, looked here and there, and then plunged into the waters of the river. It came toward me a short distance then stopped and gazed at me. I was not alarmed because I supposed it would return to the bank and leave. But no! The big brute half-walked and half-swam as it came ever nearer to me. I watched it closely and I became a little nervous. I could not go across the stream because of the fast flowing and deeper water. Therefore, I was forced to remain where I was.

This bear came until it lounged in the water directly beside me. I could have reached out and touched it. I stood in trapped silence as it very nonchalantly rolled and wallowed next to me.

Soon, thankfully, it left by the same route it had come and I was alone again.

What caused this animal to come to me at that critical time? I'll never know. Incidentally, the "people noise" I had heard was caused by [people scrambling away from] a cranky, marauding bear in the parking area which I had just left. Thelma and the kids were there and said the bear finally left and went over the side of the road and down the canyon side.

Was my polite friend the same troublesome bear? It probably was and had plunged into the river to cool off its temper.

Perhaps it thought I would share my fish. Selfishly, I did not.





Dad and Christmas

(Twila's memories)

Dad and Christmas, a natural fit. He seemed to enjoy the hoopla — putting up a tree, making us gifts, and carrying on traditions from his own childhood.

One of my fondest Christmas memories was our highly anticipated but anxiety-producing yearly telephone call from Santa (who always sounded suspiciously like Dad). He'd ask us what we wanted for Christmas and we'd rattle off our lists, but then came the loaded question, "Have you been naughty or nice?" Despite our inflated replies, he always seemed to know personal details about our naughtiness that would cast doubt on how generous he might be.

We often decorated our living room windows with white-flocked, stenciled, Christmas designs and I remember making paper-chain garlands for the tree glued together with homemade flour and water paste. In the early Logan years our tree was usually a real one purchased at a Christmas tree lot. At nighttime, I'd lay on my back underneath, draw in as much of its pine fragrance as I could, and watch our colorful, gurgling bubble lights magically radiate up through its branches.

In a Christmas Eve tradition stemming from Dad's boyhood on the ranch in Idaho, we used big safety pins to fasten everyday stockings — the largest, clean ones we could find — on the back of an upholstered, over-stuffed chair. (With no fireplace, we had to improvise.) Then on Christmas morning we'd retrieve our individual socks, sagging and bulging with unshelled nuts, oranges, hard candy and small gifts.



After only a few hours of wakeful sleep, we began begging at Mom and Dad's bedside — pleading to be allowed to begin opening presents. They usually relented around 4:00 a.m., long before dawn. Frankly, I think Dad was as excited as we were on those magical mornings! He would make us wait in a huddle at the top of the steps until the older boys in their basement bedroom could be roused — always a frustrating delay — then he would have us shut our eyes until he had turned on the Christmas tree lights. When he gave us the go-ahead, we would swarm the room and find the presents Santa brought for us. Most of the time Santa presents would be unwrapped and propped in prominent locations, easy to spot. But Dad (oops, Santa) also enjoyed hiding gifts inside the Christmas Tree. I remember one of the boys finding his new fly rod stuffed up alongside the trunk. And another time a rifle was similarly hidden.

Dad often gave us gifts he had carefully crafted himself at his shop at Ace Mill. He made sturdy doll cribs for Tami and me; mine was used by my daughters and now my granddaughters. I also remember a kid-sized china cabinet he made for us, which housed our miniature play dishes. And I still have the small, three-drawered jewelry chest he made and gave to me as a teenager. It has held my most precious keepsakes for decades. He made items for other family members, too, each a product of his fine craftsmanship and fatherly love.

After the excitement of opening presents was over and we settled down to munching nuts and oranges amidst the vast sea of wrapping paper and ribbon, Mom and Dad usually crept back to bed. So did the boys! But that's when I began calling my friends to see what they got and later, at a more decent hour, my gang and I made the rounds to each others houses to check out the Christmas loot. The rest of the day was usually spent playing with whoever had the most exciting new gifts. Very laid back. Nothing formal.





1958 Christmas morning at the VLD house.

LaVel and Colleen and their daughter, Corrette, were visiting; he was on holiday leave from Abilene, Texas where he was stationed in the Air Force. Their daughter, Lynnette, was born there three months later.

Brent was stationed in Hawaii in the Army at the time and couldn't make it home for Christmas that year. He sent some great gifts home for us, though — poi, dried Octopus, leis, and a grass skirt ! Photos of LaVel and Brent in their military uniforms are on the wall on either side of the Christmas tree.

The rest of us were still living at home and ranged in ages from Brian (15) to Debra (2). Duane wasn't born yet.

Christmas day, 1958, after the chaos of Christmas mess was cleaned up. The large spray of flowers on the bureau was from Grandpa Jick Hall's funeral, which had been held three days earlier in Ogden. He had died quietly of a heart attack, while reading the newspaper in his rocking chair on Dec. 18. He was 78.

This was the year Santa gave Tami and me elegant Revlon Dolls (at the left), kinda like Barbies only much larger. I still have mine (the blond one). But my favorite doll was the "Priscilla" doll in the center. It was a "character doll," with a patched-knee, tomboy outfit, cropped blond hair, and freckles. Loved it! It's long gone, though.



A family snapshot, October 1960.

Well, here we all are, or at least all but Duane, who was born three months later. Mom and Dad were still adding to the family on the bottom end even as the top ones were drifting off to begin their own families. From left to right beginning in the back, a synopsis of our family at this stage goes like this:

LaVel (22) was in the midst of a seven-year hitch in the Air Force. He and Colleen had two little girls, Corrette (2) and Lynette (1).

Brian (17) was a senior in high school. His interests lay in the sciences, especially math and physics, rather than sports, even though the high school basketball coach pressured him to participate (in vain).

Brent (21) had also just completed military service, three years in the army. He was on the brink of departing to Switzerland to serve a two year mission.

And seated on the couch, left to right:

Tamara (10) is holding our family dog, a Skipperke, named appropriately, Skippy. Tami was in the fourth grade.

Mom (44) was on the older side to be having a baby but we were all thrilled. I believe this pregnancy was a difficult one for her, though.

Lauris (7), in the first grade, was a ball of fire and kept the pot stirred constantly.

Dad (45) was king of his castle. He loved us all dearly but I remember times when he escaped down to his gunroom or away in his pickup when the noise and commotion got to him.

Debra (4) was still at home with Mom. She was bubbly and happy, but was about to lose her place as the spoiled youngest child. Years later, as an adult, she told me she resented the attention Duane received when they were little. It didn't last long, though.

Twila (12). Me. I was at an awkward stage in my life, in the sixth grade, on the verge of adolescence.



Duane's Birth

Duane, Dad and Mom's caboose, was born on Jan. 21, 1961. Duane's birth ushered in the period of maximum family craziness in our home. Bustle, activity, mess, and noise was at it's height during the following few years. And Dad sometimes felt the strain. He usually reacted by re-treating, often in his pickup. Who knows where he went? Probably up Logan Canyon where its beauty, peace, and quiet could restore his sanity or out to his shop at Ace Mill, where he could putter around in his own, private domain.

Mom touched on Dad's aversion to kid noise in a letter to LaVel and Colleen in January 1957, a few years before Duane entered the scene:

We spent Christmas Day at Grandma Halls. All of my brothers and sisters were there except Clifton. All the grandchildren were there but you kids and Brent. (He decided to stay home and deliver Brian's papers for him.) As all of your cousins are from 6 years to a few months of age, we all had a noisy, crying, diapers good time. Your Dad retreated to the car and slept. But I was glad for Grandpa and Grandma as they seemed to enjoy it, and Twila, Tammy, and Lauris thot it was OK.[30]

The "kid noise" got worse as more and more grandchildren arrived. After we each married and returned home for visits with our own children, Dad would welcome our little ones with smiles and teasing but later, when the confusion and noise got to be too much for him, he'd leave. We didn't take offense. Dad simply needed his space.

He loved his grandchildren but couldn't tolerate lengthy doses of their crying, whining, begging, fighting, mess, and competition for adult attention. Family reunions, when multiple families with many young children gathered together in a confined space, were especially difficult for him. He loved us but we could try his nerves at times.

Left: **Dad holds Duane** mid-way through a family game of croquet in our backyard. Judging by the fading blooms on our lilac bush, the photo was taken in late May or early June 1962.

None, But I Got Eight

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 87)

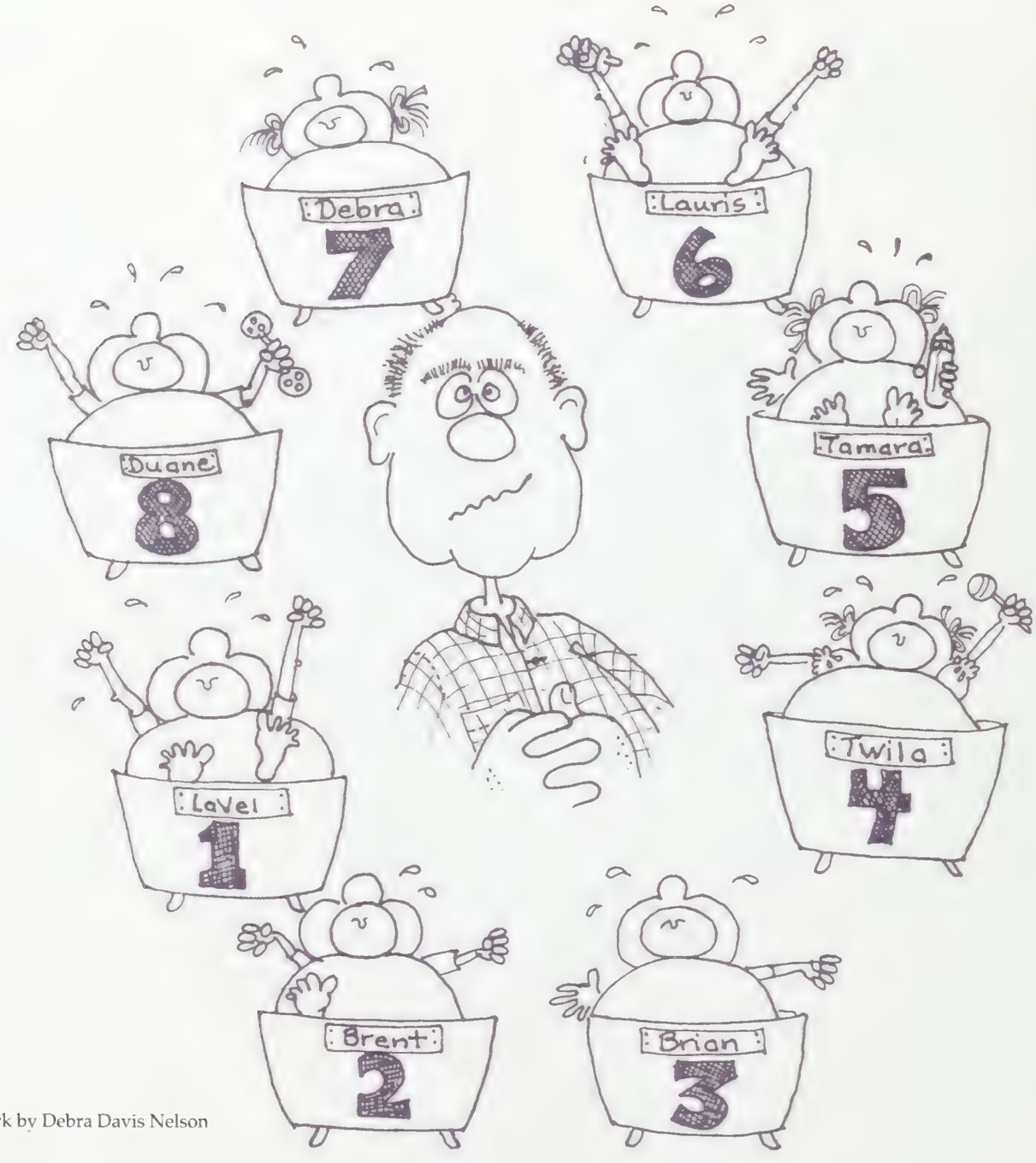
I was, in a sense, an only child. I was the last of eight children and seven years separated me from my next older brother, Wayne. Because of this I grew up somewhat alone and never experienced a close association with my brothers and sisters.

Before marriage I had almost pledged that I would never become a father. Yes, I would marry, support a wife, and acquire financial stability instead of "kids." I, with my wife, would enjoy life as we assisted others in their needs. Sounded good, but what happened?

For some reason Thelma talked me into trying to become a father. Well, I resisted for some months then — well, yes, I gave in.

This same pattern took place SEVEN more times!!! Am I indignant or ashamed? You bet I'm not !! Though it has been difficult to support such a large family but I'm glad I was talked into every one of them.

True, I did not attain great wealth so far as money is concerned but all the riches in the world cannot buy what I now possess.



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson

It Was Convenient

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 167)

Versal, weld this heavy angle iron to those upright steel pieces in this wall," Bert Craw, the Raymond Construction foreman, directed me as he lifted one end of a four-inch by four-inch piece of structural metal.

"Okay," I replied, "But you will have to help me. It's got to be held in place while I spot weld it."

This was taking place in the large hospital at Idaho Falls in about 1960. I had been delegated to drive a large truck, loaded with needed supplies, from Logan to Idaho Falls. I was also supposed to do some arc welding while there. I had labored until about mid-afternoon when Bert and I had the conversation as noted above. We were in the x-ray room. The heavy iron piece was to support a new sophisticated x-ray machine.



Dad welding, 1957.

"I'll hold this end on the mark I've made. You hold your end on that chalk mark about six feet up that metal stud," Bert instructed.

I grasped the stinger of the arc welder and then I took hold of the angle iron.

"This is hard to hold, Bert," I replied, "But I believe I can manage."

We, together, hoisted the metal piece to its proper position. I then held it in place with my left hand as I raised my right hand to apply the electric weld. I forcefully nodded my head, which lowered the face of the welding helmet over my eyes and face.

Then it happened! I lost my grip on the heavy angle iron. The piece, of course, obeyed the force of gravity and plunged toward the floor. Bert was still trying to hold his end, but in so doing the iron fell in an upright position.

The point of impact was directly on my right big toe! I dropped the stinger, ripped off my helmet, and then stomped around on my good left leg. The pain was severe, but after a few moments it tapered off and I was then able to resume my work.

Bert appointed someone to help me and we finally completed the assignment.

"Well, I guess I had better head back to Logan," I told Bert.

"How is your toe?" he asked.

"It is numb, but I'm going to see if I received a black toenail."

I then unlaced my work boot and slowly removed such from my foot.

"Holy smoke! Look at all that blood!" I excitedly remarked. "I believe there is a pint of blood in this shoe." Further investigation revealed that such was actually the case.

"Let me help you to that room next door. I'll get a nurse to look after you," Bert said.

Thereupon, I hopped into the next room where a nurse immediately took charge. Just by going through our door I was able to obtain help in the official emergency room.

This was truly convenient!

Incidentally, after cleaning, etc, I was taken to a doctor's office where I was bandaged up. My big toe was broken into four pieces and the toe nail was literally severed off. Yet, I was able to drive the truck back to Logan by doing all footwork with my good left foot. Even the gas pedal and brake were actuated by such. It was a long, painful drive home

Silver Anniversary

Mom and Dad observed their 25th anniversary in the summer of 1962 doing what they loved best in the world — they backpacked into pristine mountains in northern Utah and spent a week alone surrounded by breathtaking beauty. Dad wrote:

In the fall of 1961, I began to think how grand it would be as a commemoration of our silver anniversary, if the two of us could spend a few days comparatively alone among the mountains, lakes, trees, and rocks, of the great Uintah Range. We had been on the borders of the primitive area before, but to actually trek into it had been only a dream. But now, in July 1962, our dream had crystalized and we were above timber line 18 miles from the nearest road.

Rain, hail, wind, sleet, and sunshine each took turns welcoming us to this beautiful snow-capped area. And all of this on the 24th of July. . . . and we soon discovered the colorful cut-throats [trout] in Red Castle Lake did not mind the weather at all and even seemed eager to congratulate us by viciously striking at the brass spinning lures that we offered them. . . . No artist could duplicate the beauty and the wildness that seemed to emanate from everywhere you looked. It made me feel proud and fortunate to behold, yet insignificant amid such immense expanse.[32]





A 1959 photo of Dad unloading camping gear near Temple Fork in Logan Canyon. He enjoyed planning and preparing for outdoor excursions almost as much as the actual experience.

Hunting

One of Dad's main forms of recreation for many years was hunting. Bringing home a substantial supply of meat was important but it wasn't the main reason he enjoyed the sport. He thrived on the planning, the comradeship with good friends, the time spent in beautiful, rugged locations, and the testing of his marksmanship skills with their accompanying bragging rights, if successful. Hunting was a manly sport suited to his virile nature.

Over the years Dad bagged rabbits, rock chucks, pheasants, deer, ducks, elk, caribou, and other game, most of which went directly to the table or in the freezer for later use. Mom often participated, too, although I think her motive was mainly to spend time with Dad doing what he loved to do. She became very good at preparing wild game. We grew up on it.

Following are excerpts (among many) from letters Mom wrote describing several of Dad's hunting trips. The first is addressed to LaVel and Colleen who were living in Connecticut shortly after their marriage.

31 Oct. 1956.
My Dear Kids,

. . . . We had a good hunting trip to Price — it was the best tonic in the world for both Versal and me. Brent couldn't break away from the school football game and the ROTC parade [he played a coronet in the LHS band] *during the Aggie homecoming, so he didn't go with us. The weather was perfect for our hunt and we were able to drive much farther into hunting territory than ever before. We hunted where you have always been so lucky, LaVel, and your Dad got a huge buck with a gorgeous spread. It was surely a beauty. He also shot a 3-pointer and a 2-pointer — you know your Dad. He felt right bad because you weren't along as he's sure that this is one year he had you beat, remember your biggest buck bets?*[33]

A few months later, in another letter to Vel and Colleen, Mom described Dad's rabbit hunting exploits:

Jan. 16, 1957
Dear kids,

. . . We did all take time out last Sat. and Versal, Brent, Brian and I went rabbit hunting out Snowville way. Remember where we went with the gun club, Vel? Well we went to the same place, and gee! We had a lot of fun and a good hunt. The day was warm, there was just a skift of snow, and lots of rabbits. Now if Colleen and you had been there it would have been perfect! We'll all go together some time!

Brent used the shot gun and got 8 rabbits. He even came home with 10 shells. Brian used the 22 and got 1 sure and possibly 2. (He got into a lot of shooting, but he still isn't

Successful pheasant hunt, 1959.
Dad's notation: "With some very good friends after an enjoyable pheasant hunt." The man next to Dad on the far right is Lynn Olsen, Colleen's father.





Lauris (12), his friend, Richard Skinner, and Dad, 30 Oct. 1965. Dad's notation: *"One of my prize trophies taken in the Cache Mtns. Specifically in Green Canyon. The gun is a 2.56 Newton."*

too good on running targets.) I used the Newton and got 5 out of 11 shots. (I'm smart, I wait 'til they set down). Then, there's your Dad — he says he gave up counting after he got to 50. He did make several beautiful running shots at a good 150-200 yards. He also got one or 2 with a pistol, but that shooting wasn't so hot as he'd have to empty the pistol at them each time.[34]

Five years later, in 1962, Mom described an elk hunting expedition to Brian, who was serving his mission in Oxnard, California at the time.

Oct 10, 1962
My dear Brian,
. . . . Oh! I must tell you about Versal's elk hunt in Sept. At last, after 10 years of trying to draw lucky. Versal at last made it. He received a permit to hunt for either sex in the Logan Peak area. Radar Holman (the Norwegian guy from the shop) drew for the same area too. So they agreed to hunt together. For 2 Saturdays before the hunt opened they drove into the area to acquaint themselves with the terrain.

The first Sat. they scouted, Versal took the old pickup, loaded the back with rocks and drove clear up past the White Bed Grounds. I don't know how they even got it to go up such perpendicular roads. The second Sat. Radar borrowed Marilyn Painter's jeep and Lauris and I went along, too. We rode all over the Logan Peak area. The scenery was gorgeous as all of the canyons are in full fall attire. Wow! Those jeeps really eat up the bad roads, but they really buck and burp adoing it. I've never hung on so desperately in my life.

Well, Versal and Radar selected a campsite and the area they intended to hunt on the east side of Logan Peak.

The next Fri. night they packed their gear and departed. Before dawn Sat. morning Versal and Radar had breakfasted and departed from camp on foot, to gain their pre-selected vantage points. In the misty-grey of early dawn visibility was limited but Radar thought he saw "hunters on horse-back" as they walked along. Versal immediately "scoped" the thicket Radar had indicated and [said], "Those aren't hunters! There are 4 elk surveying us." And "Make it a neck shot."

Both men fired at once. Versal dropped a huge cow elk and Radar a nice yearling calf. They were still so close to camp that they walked back, got the jeep, and worked it down to their elk. It was certainly fortunate that they were so close, as Versal's cow was so big that they had quite a hard time loading her at best.

The elk were home and in Gerber's locker before noon Sat. Our cow dressed out at 400 lbs. and has really filled up our deep freeze. . . . Versal says it wasn't a "real hunt" but more like going for a stroll and meeting your game. Just wait 'til I draw! I'll probably have to climb every peak in the area to find an elk![35]

As Dad got older his attitude towards hunting changed dramatically. I watched this transition and was amazed at his aboutface. Through all of my growing-up years he was an avid hunter. I remember him huting ducks in "West Fields" (the Bear River slews west of Logan), deer every fall as well as elk most years, and, of course, his quest for moose in Alaska, but near the time of my marriage, he changed. His growing love for photography and genealogy soon superceded his hunting interests. Additionally, as he matured spiritually, he gained a deeper reverence for all life forms. Not only did he lose his cavelier attitude of killing for sport (rabbit and ground chuck hunting), he lost all desire to kill at all, even for sustenance. Dad became a softie. (However, he remained a threat to fish to the end of his days!)

Two Mission-Matched Weddings

Brent & Inge

Brent met German-born Inge Scheffel while serving his mission in Switzerland. They were married in the Logan Temple on Oct. 25, 1963, four months after his return.



Brian & Jackie

Brian married Jackie Millward on April 15, 1965, in the Logan Temple. They met while both served as missionaries in the California Mission.



Financial Worries

I never felt "poor" growing up, even though our family was on the lower end of the economic scale. We always had the necessities and with frugal planning we managed a few luxuries. Hard work, frugality, and saving were taught to and expected from each of us at an early age.

Dad was never without work but from time to time his work hours were cut back and his stress level would rise accordingly. The winter of 1963-64 was one of those strained periods. Our family finances were stretched thin with Mom and Dad supporting Brian on his mission, while still looking after five younger children at home, each with their own needs.

In a letter to Brian, who wrote asking for extra funds during that time, Mom gently denied his request and explained by letter: *Dad's work hours have been cut for the past 2 months. He's only supposed to work 40 hrs. as the rest of the shop does.* [A 40-hour work week was "under-employment" in Dad's eyes.] *Things are a bit slow. However, in spite of a $20-$30 per week reduction in income, we're managing by extreme caution. But we've been unable to build any reserve as we've had the past year.*[37]

I, too, must have been oblivious to my parent's financial concerns during this worrisome time because I



Below: In this photo **LaVel and Dad are laying cement for Dad's new repair shop.** In the background is the new redwood fence they also constructed as part of the overall improvement project.[40] Photo June 1964.

For months LaVel and Dad spent most evenings putting in the new fence, laying cement, and building the new repair shop. Dad's old garage, to the left, was used for storage after the new one was built. LaVel, who had finished his 7-year hitch in the Air Force, was back in Logan working as a policeman at this time.[41] Tami remembers fellow workers at Ace Mill volunteering help with the patio/driveway/garage project, too.[42]

Right: **3-year-old Duane** couldn't resist riding his tricycle through Dad's wet driveway cement. June 1964.



lobbied for (and got) several new dresses for church and high school dances. Mom sewed up a storm for me. Regretfully, I realize now how demanding I must have been. I hope I expressed my gratitude.

The 1963-64 winter funds crunch was tight enough (and scared Dad enough) that even though he was back to working full tilt by May, he took measures to avoid being caught in a financial bind again. He decided to build a large workshop, one where he could fall back on his old car repair and body work skills, if needed, to supplement his Ace Mill income. In two June letters to Brian, after the crisis had abated, Mom described Dad's project:

Here we have glorious summer in full bloom — the kids are noisily out of school — the ditches everywhere are sparkling with water (and kids) — and I have been irrigating since 6 a.m.

Our yard is a mess, albeit a progressive mess. The driveway is full of piles of sand, concrete forms, etc. My flower beds are taking such a beating that I'm retreating for this summer.

But your Dad has a concrete floor poured in the old garage and all of the floor poured for the new double garage. Every evening Vel and Versal are busy as can be as the concrete should all be poured before the weather gets too hot.[38]

And in second letter two weeks later:

I guess I told you we remortgaged and borrowed enough to build a large double garage with the long-range planning that, whenever the shop is forced to cut your Dad's work week to 40 hrs. (as they did last winter) your Dad can do a little extra work here. Your Dad simply can't bear to be idle even for a little bit. It nearly drives him crazy.

So we have the garage about halfway up. We won't have enough to finish it, but we hope to at least get it up, roofed, and painted before fall.[39]

Dad eventually finished the workshop and ever after it was always filled with various family-owned vehicles in various states of repair, but to my knowledge he never used it to contract out his repair skills.





Above: Davis kids and Hall cousins in the Siberian Elm tree, which presided over our backyard until 1979. Photo 1964.

Fourteen years later, in the summer of 1978, Dad, Duane and Lauris cut down the huge tree to allow sun on Mom and Dad's newly expanded garden. The backyard renovations were undertaken in response to President Spencer W. Kimball's urgings in several General Conference addresses that church members plant gardens as part of a personall self-sufficiency plan. Mom wrote: *"Our shady back lawn is indeed gone, shade and lawn. But at this time the Lord has admonished repeatedly: gardens! And we're surprisingly, enjoying gardening."*[3]

Inset photo, opposite page: Tami (by ladder) and Deb (in the treehouse) in the stately tree next to our front driveway, 1964.

Our Trees

We had two, huge trees in our yard, a massive Siberian Elm in the back and a big Box Elder tree at the side of our front driveway. Both provided great entertainment for all eight of us Davis kids in the summers.

Brent built a tree house in the one at the side of our driveway, when we first moved to Logan in 1952. As he grew older and developed more adult interests, Brian eagerly took over the kid-friendly attraction. We each successively sawed, hammered, and added our individual touches to the tree hut.

When it was my turn to claim ownership, my friends and I sometimes had sleepovers high above the ground. We were in a world of our own up there eating "white-stuff" sandwiches (Miracle Whip spread on Wonder Bread) and gabbing about everyone and everything. When we finally wound down at night, my pals, Leslie Kofoed and Sandra Thorne, would curl up in sleeping bags on the floor of the tree house and, since there was only room there for two safely, I was relegated to Brent's purloined, khaki-colored, enclosed, army hammock suspended between two branches above them. It was tricky getting in and out but awesome once I got situated. What great memories!



When he was 10, Duane — the last Davis sibling to hack away at it — and his friends added a patio and a second story to the structure, which, Mom wrote, "was bristling with nails."[44] Over the next few years they added other features. In a letter dated 19 March 1975, when Duane was 14, she wrote:

Bob [Berntson] and Duane are competely reworking the tree hut — again. But this year they've torn out the floor Brent put in so many years ago and started from scratch. They're sophisticated enough to have the hut wired for electricity (via an extension cord from the garage) so they can use the power saw up there. They've also hauled up a portable oil heater by using a pulley and ropes with the van furnishing the power. It doesn't really matter that the first time they tried, the rope broke and the heater bounced from 6 feet up. They say the heater works fine even if it doesn't look so hot anymore.[45]

As for the Siberian Elm in the back, when Mom and Dad decided to tear up their back lawn and plant a huge garden in the late 70s (see p. 256), the tree had to go. Its shade was inhibiting garden growth. So Dad and the boys took after it with a buzz saw, hacking off most of it branches. They hauled most of the refuse away but the hulking trunk and some of the larger, main branches were too heavy and bulky to budge. So Dad got creative. Mom explained:

Versal keeps things interesting here. After looking at that huge old downed tree trunk lying across our strawberry patch all winter, and wondering and debating how to get that monstrosity out, Versal called Vel for consultation. First they hired a much bigger saw and tried to cut thru the frozen hardwood. No luck — the saw just couldn't handle it; and Versal and Vel decided that, even if they could cut it into pieces, the heavy wood would be impossible to drag out with Vel's jeep, and no way could they load that heavy stuff into our trailer. So — Versal called Reed Johnson who came, took one look, said, "Sure, I'll drop by with the crane. You get one of the Raymond Construction dump trucks."

So yesterday that huge crane with its 90 foot boom pulled into our driveway, reached over the garage and patio, hoisted the pieces of that stubborn old Siberian Elm out of our backyard and gently laid them in the truck. However, to clear the air for that huge boom, Duane had to shinny up the old box elder tree east of our house and buzz-saw off a couple of big branches. Versal was amazed and alarmed at how brittle that old tree is — the branches almost popped off. So that tree is getting a drastic hair-cut and the old place will never look quiet the same again. Brent built his first tree hut in that tree in 1952, the year we moved here, and ever since it's been a dimension of play and dreaming for all succeeding brothers and sisters. Finally, Duane and friend Bob Berntson yearly (summerly) rebuilt that tree hut bigger and better, even to a 2nd level affair. Now, if it, the tree doesn't respond to drastic trimming, it's doomed![46]

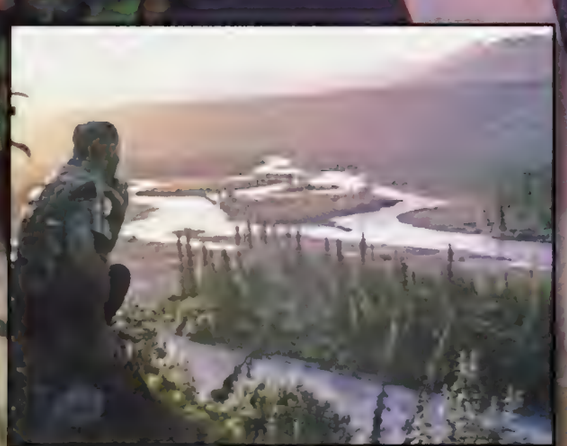




Our home at 371 West 2nd South in Logan, Utah, showing our two tremendous trees, Thanksgiving day, 1967

The hand-me-down tree hut can be seen in the tree next to the driveway in this photo. It is located on the big, horizontal branch heading out to the right.

Inset Photo: Our Logan home in March 2011.



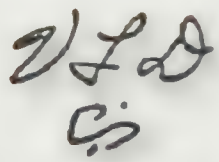
A portion of my painting of Dad overlooking the Nenana River in Alaska (58"X 38" acrylic-on-masonite, 1977). In the lower right hand corner of this painting (unseen here) Dad had me paint this inscription as a tribute to Mom: *No clouds from the storms of life can dim the Eternal Radiance of true love and devotion.*

I painted it from the photo to the left. Mom's caption on the back of the photo said: *Versal, 1974. The Nenana River as seen from the Denali Highway. This is the river Versal and LaVel floated, hunting moose, in 1966. The picture indeed portrays Versal and his wild, free spirit and great love for God's beautiful earth, undesecrated by man.*

Chapter Eight

Alaska

1966, 1974, 1984 & 1986



Alaska drew Dad to her like a siren's call in Greek myths. The fascination he had for her pristine, unmastered wilderness was as much a part of him as his bones and sinews. He made three road trips to Alaska (and part of a fourth) as well as several forays into southern Canada. On each occasion he began planning for the next trip before he ever reached home. Even when weak, terribly ill, and dying with cancer in 1988, he wrote: *"I am planning to go to Canada & Alaska this next summer. . . . I realize this desire is an obsession with me but I would like to go one more time."*[1]

The following essay, written by Dad, reflects his deep love of primeval country embodied by Alaska.

The Great Outdoors

(Dad's journal, July 1980)

In the fading light of a warm, summer day I gaze eastward. My eyes search between large, stately pine trees and I see a small, but very beautiful, alpine lake. It glistens with small ripples giving the silhouette of the trees on the far bank a myriad effect. Light clouds dot the azure blue of the evening sky.

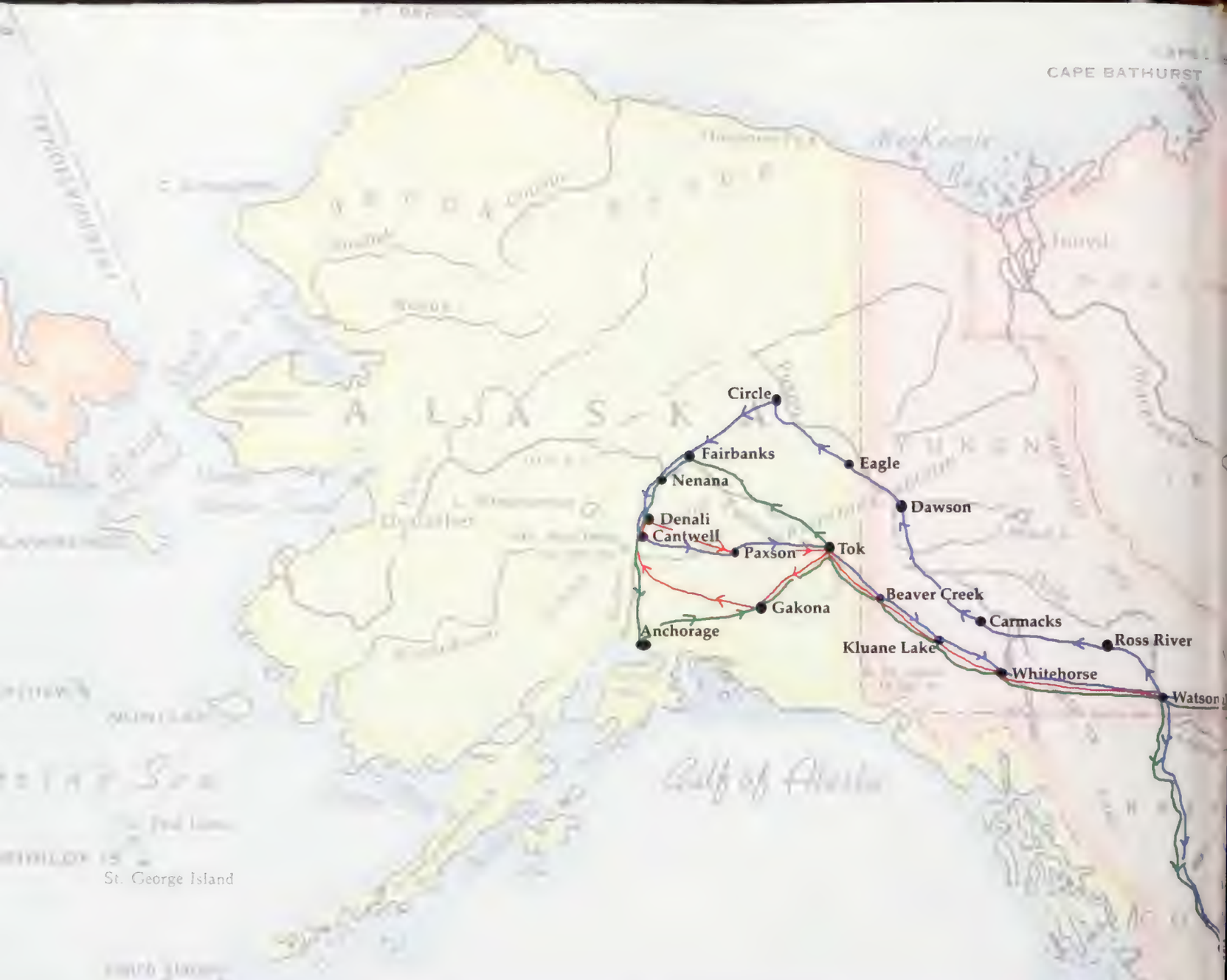
Alpine flowers fringe the landscape around the tiny lake. The mountainside to my left and westward of me is trussed with large Douglas fir, balsam and native white pine. All is quiet and very serene. Surely, only Diety could produce such a remarkable combination of pristine beauty and soul-soothing tranquility.

I have always loved to be in, or near, such as this where I can meditate and often address the One who created it all. I regard such sublime peace that I find here as a necessary balance to my mental well being. Here I can think and ponder very objectively. I can develop a resolve to guide me when confronted with the myriad challenges of everyday life. When a major problem or decision must be given deep thought, it is here that I can most effectively reach a course of correct action.

Some people require a private room, others a lone walk, some the companionship of a trusted friend, but my greatest help is complete seclusion in a sacred-like spot, usually far from the constant habitation of mankind.

Sometimes in various seasons of the year I can feel some physical discomfort, but my mental balance is always made more perfect by being wrapped in the glory and majesty of the incomparable insurmountability of nature.

Surely God meant that beauty such as this should be used and protected. Simple man cannot duplicate such as this but he can, and should, revere it. May God and man see fit to preserve such for the benefit of those, such as I, who must have the strength derived therefrom.



Excursions to Alaska

1966 Caribou and moose hunting. Versal, LaVel, Lauris & Reidar Holman (one of Dad's Ace Mill buddies) shot 5 caribou, which dressed out at 600 lbs., and traveled 7024 miles at a total cost of $559.46.

1974 Floating the Yukon. Versal, Thelma, Deb, Duane & Coalie (the family dog) traveled 8,884 miles by road, using 720 gallons of gas at a total cost of $450.00. For six days they floated 180 miles down the Yukon River disembarking at Circle, Alaska, only 30 miles from the Arctic Circle, the furthest point north reachable by road at that time.

1984 Simply Sightseeing. Versal & Thelma and old friends, Wendell & Fern Virgin, traveled 6600 miles, at a cost of $735.00 for the Davises and $540.00 for the Virgins.

1986 With Bessie and another couple. The trip was aborted in northern Canada when Dad had a disagreement with the other man's wife. Plus he didn't feel well. He flew home.



Excursions Summary

(Dad's epilogue at the end of his 1984 Alaska diary)

Ever since I was a little boy I had heard about and read of Alaska. My pioneering instinct always demanded that I should sometime go there. My lifestyle has been such that I was not able to fulfill this need until quite late in life.

In 1965 plans were finally made to "break the ice." Reidar Holman, an Ace Mill co-worker of mine, and I formulated some plans to go there and do some hunting. A friend of his was included as was LaVel. We created a savings plan and then steadily added to it. But conditions were not entirely right by the fall season of that year. So all was postponed until the following year. During the wait Reidar's friend dropped out and so I included Lauris to take his place. The trip took place and lasted 3 weeks. We had a wonderful time with great hunting success.

After that first trip I pledged I would return and take Thelma with me. She was somewhat reluctant but finally agreed when we included Duane and Deb in our plans. This took place in 1974. This was not a hunting trip so no plans for such took place. However we did take my 14 ft. aluminum boat and a six-man black rubber raft. We added to our great appreciation of Alaska by floating 180 miles of the immense Yukon River. The trip was a great success and again I secretly vowed I would again return.

So for 10 years I made more plans, which became fractured by illnesses, mission endeavors, and other things. After our church mission we planned to go in 1982 but my heart attack stopped us. In the following year (1983) we again made plans and Thelma's operation [for uterine cancer] closed that door.

So in 1984, though both of us were physically impaired, we planned again. My desire to go had been almost insatiable and therefore my insistence had to be gratified. We asked Wendell & Fern Virgin [longtime friends going back to our St. Anthony days] to join us, which they did. Thelma was somewhat reluctant to go but we finally decided to do so and from that time forth she never complained a bit. I'll be forever grateful to her and the Virgins for being such delightful traveling companions.

(In 1986, Dad headed to Alaska a fourth time with his new wife, Bessie, and another couple but the trip was cut short. This failed excursion is discussed on page 367.)

1966 - Caribou and Moose Hunting

((16 Sept. - 5 Oct.)

Versal Davis, LaVel Davis, Lauris Davis & Reidar Holman



Reidar Holman, Sven Johansen, and LaVel Davis begin planning for their Alaska hunting trip, spring of 1965. (Versal took the photo.) Later, when Sven was unable to go, Lauris, age thirteen, became his substitute.

1966 Trip Log

16 Sept.

Left Logan at 5:45 p.m.. Drove to a rest spot about 100 miles from the [Canadian] border.

17 Sept. Saturday

. . . Drove through Calgary (a large city). From Calgary to Edmonton a beautiful freeway goes through an area that defies description. This area is tremendous in expanse, rolling and spotted with groves of trees. The farms are very well kept and the farmyards are spotless. Buildings are painted and flowers in abundance on many lots. The cities and towns are also clean and indicate prosperity and pride. . .

18 Sept.

. . . About 50 miles out of Dawson Creek we hit the gravel section of the Alaska Highway. . . . Yellow is everywhere and we apparently have hit the jackpot for color pictures. The expanses are hard to realize. . . . We expect to drive about 24 more hours before we reach the Alaskan border. Have had no trouble and everything is fine.

19 Sept.

. . . Reached the Alaska border in 68 hrs. from Logan. Purchased licenses, tags, and a few groceries at Tok. Game warden indicated best hunting success was at Denali Hiway. Camping tonite about 40 miles southwest of Tok. . .

20 Sept.

The tundra here is hard to walk over and is wet as wet. Water in small lakes and ponds can be found anywhere even on top of many of the hills. . . . Mt. McKinley is supposed to be visible from here but nothing can be seen as of now. Maybe this weather will lift in the next few days and permit us to hunt and see the country better.



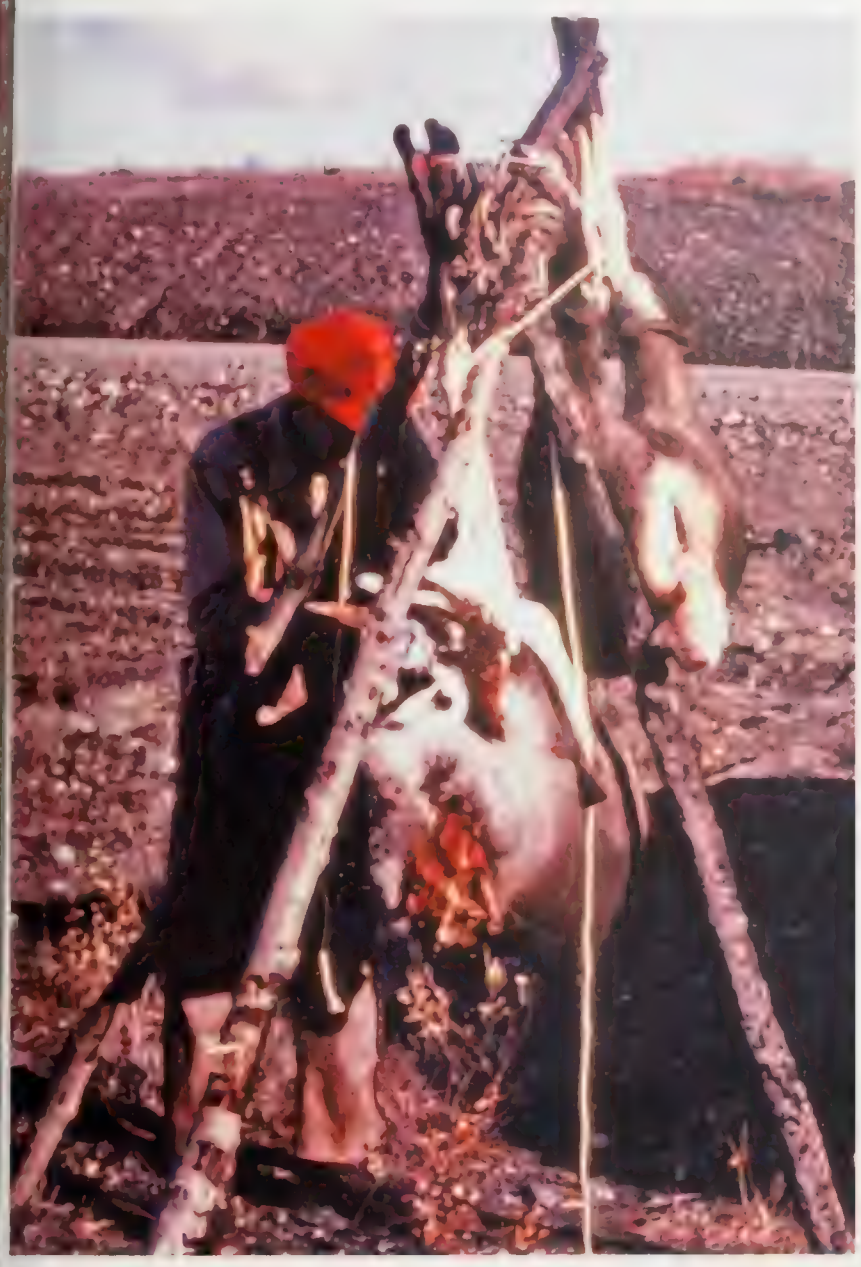
The hunters encountered snow on the Denali road when going over a pass between Paxson and the Susitna River, Sept. 20, 1966. Dad wrote: *"We were forced to mount the snow tires and even then it was difficult to reach the top."*

21 Sept.

. . . I set up the spotting scope and soon saw 2 caribou perhaps 2 miles distant. It was late in the afternoon so we decided to remain in camp and hunt them tomorrow. Had a good supper of soups (onion and chicken noodle). Will play cards for a while tonite. . . We feel optimistic tonite about getting caribou tomorrow. Hope we do OK.

2 Sept.

Up early this morning and had a light breakfast. . . We decided on how to approach the caribou that we had seen the night before. Lauris & I went in a semi-circle to the right and LaVel & Reidar went to the left. We agreed to meet on a high promontory between. Lauris & I had just reached this point when we heard shooting to the east of us. Binoculars showed that Reidar had walked almost directly toward 4 head of caribou. A little stalking and some pretty good shooting by him put down 2 nice caribou bulls.



Reidar dressing his two caribou bulls, 22 Sept. 1966. The hunters feasted on caribou for supper. Dad described the meat as very good and light in color and wrote: *"We barbecued our meal tonight over charcoal in a hole in a bank of dirt. Had potatoes, beans, gravy & peaches to go with our meat. Canned pop bought at Cantwell topped off the festivities."*

23 Sept.

. . . we drove up toward Mt. McKinley Natl. Park. We came to where the Nenana River crossed under the road . . . LaVel & I are going to make about an 18-mile float down this river which we feel will take perhaps 2 days. The weather looks good though cold. Maybe we can get a shot at the elusive moose around here.



Before beginning the river float in search of moose, **the three men and Lauris hunted ptarmigan.** 23 Sept. 1966. Dad reported: *LaVel & I shot 13 today. They are pretty birds but dumb as a dodo. We shot some while on the set so then we decided we would not shoot until they flew. We actually had to rush them at times to make them fly. We expect to take some home to the family.*

24 Sept.

LaVel and I embarked on the Nenana River about 21 miles upstream from the bridge, which crosses it on the road to McKinley Natl. Park. This is a good river to float and we did see game along it. At one point we encountered 2 cow moose & 1 bull. Could have shot the cows but the bull was too far. At another point we jumped 3 cows and one bull, which I knocked down. I was sure it was a killing shot but when I diverted my attention to search for another bull, he rose to his feet and disappeared in the heavy bush. I feel badly about this as I'm sure it no doubt went somewhere near and died. But no amount of searching found him. However, we had the cows around us constantly. We slept the night on a sandbar in mid-river. Slept well though it rained a little.

25 Sept.

We continued our float downstream this morning. Saw very little fresh moose sign but we discovered that during the night a huge grizzly had come within about 100 yards of us.

26 Sept.

. . . Lauris is enjoying the trip but at times I believe is a little bit bored. But another few days and we will be heading back home.

We spotted some caribou about 1 P.M. and so we shouldered our guns and took off. We only needed one caribou but before we all got back in the evening, LaVel had downed 2 bulls and I got a nice bull and a cow. We will probably use our moose tags to legalize the caribou. To bed at 8:30. All are tired.

27 Sept.

Up early — nice, warm morning and Mom's birthday. Have thought of her since waking. . . We went out and picked up one of LaVel's caribou today. It was in a canyon high in the tundra area. We brought out the largest one by cutting it up in sections and tying each on a pack rack. We will go back tomorrow for another. . . . It seems these packing excursions tire us out more than anything else.

28 Sept

We drove back to Cantwell last evening to buy some margarine & bread. Was a 40 mile round trip. Groceries are fantastically high so we don't buy too much.



Versal and Lauris pack groceries and other essentials into Reidar Holman's camper before embarking on their trip, 10 Sept. 1966.

29 Sept

Reidar & I floated the Nenana River today. We searched various places long the 20 miles of river for moose but to no avail. It seems that hunter pressure has driven the moose back to the high country. Warm weather probably has helped in this respect also. . . . We are disappointed in not connecting for moose but we have tried. It has been a good experience here in this tremendous land. The terrain is endless and even a little bewildering. The effect of man is seen only along the accessible places.

Tomorrow we are going to pack out one more caribou and then pack up and start for home.

I have learned much, seen much, and experienced much. I have enjoyed the trip so far but I know I could improve the next one. However, I have no major complaints regarding this one.

30 Sept.

. . . The sunsets and sunrises in this country have been phenomenal. Twilights have been long and the moonlight glorious. The moon has remained near the horizon and appears larger than I have ever seen it before. Wish the family were here to see it.

1 Oct.

We drove on to Tok over miles and miles of flat country. At Tok we bought groceries and talked to the U.S. Customs about our meat. No transportation visa was necessary. While the truck was being serviced for oil, gas, and lube, LaVel, Reidar, and I each took a luxurious shower at $1.00 each. Lauris insisted that he wasn't dirty but he still smells like an old goat, anyway. Reidar and I shaved but LaVel said thumbs down. He says he's going home and scare the wits out of his family. . . After shifts of driving, we finally arrived at Whitehorse from where LaVel and Reidar drove until 4:00 in the morning. We have been fortunate also in observing the northern lights in this area. Bought presents for the family at home.

5 Oct.

. . . Arrived home at about 1 P.M. Weighed & divided the meat & unloaded the truck. . . Family all OK. Meat weighed 600 lbs. We traveled a total of 7024 miles. 1965 GMC truck averaged about 15 miles per gallon. Costs were: gas & oil - $232.17; licenses & tags - $215.00; food & incidentals - $112.29 for a total cost of $559.46.

Run In Grand Prairie

(Flashback. Journal II. p. 72)

In 1966 this amusing episode took place. The scene of it was in Canada about one hundred miles northwest of Dawson Creek in a small prairie town called Grand Prairie, which is near the Alaskan Highway.

Reidar Holmen, LaVel, Lauris, and I were returning from our enjoyable and successful hunting expedition to Alaska. We had been driving steadily the previous night with stops made to change drivers each three or four hours.

It was now about 8 o'clock in the morning and LaVel and Lauris had been in front driving for some time. Reidar and I were in the back of the camper where we had been sleeping. I had been sleeping soundly but now I desired to roll out of my sleeping bag and get dressed. So, I zipped my bag open, crawled out an sat upon the edge of the bed. Reidar stirred bit as I did this.

"Where are we?" He asked.

I peered out of the side window and noted that we were near Grand Prairie. I told him so. Then I slipped on my pants, threw my shirt over my shoulders, put my socks on, then slipped into my heavy hunting boots.

I raised one foot up and placed it, with the shoe, against the formica edge of the serving counter.

Then — "Hey, don't do that. You'll ruin that top!" Reidar said in an aggravated manner.

"I won't hurt your da__'d top!" I exploded.

"Well, this is my truck you know," he returned.

Rather than stay there and argue, I decided I would join LaVel and Lauris in the cab. I looked out the side window and realized we were approaching the town. There was a single stoplight there and I figured LaVel would have to make a stop. I donned my hunting cap and prepared to quickly open the exit door in the rear of the camper. Then, I planned, while stopped, I would join them in the wide seat of the cab.

Yes, LaVel coasted to a dead stop. I opened the door, jumped out and reclosed the door. Then LaVel pulled forward just as I just cleared the tongue of the trailer. I grasped the side of the camper and yelled loudly for LaVel to stop.

But no, the truck and trailer steadily drove on through the middle of town. My shirt was loose and my untied boots were clumping clumsily against the paved road as I took eight-to-ten-foot strides. People were watching as I sailed along half-running, half-flying.

"Hey, Vel, STOP!!" I yelled two or three times. We were now nearing the exit of the small town and I knew I could not continue much longer.

Then I had a thought! I held to the camper with one hand then I pulled my cap from my head with the other. I cast the headpiece toward the front of the speeding truck. Thankfully it sailed forward, made a graceful arc in front of the windshield, and landed on the street on the opposite side of the truck.

Seeing this, LaVel slowed the truck and came to a stop. Lauris jumped out to see what was taking place.

"Hey, Dad, what are you doing out there?" he exclaimed.

I released my hold on the truck and while getting my breath, I retrieved my cap.

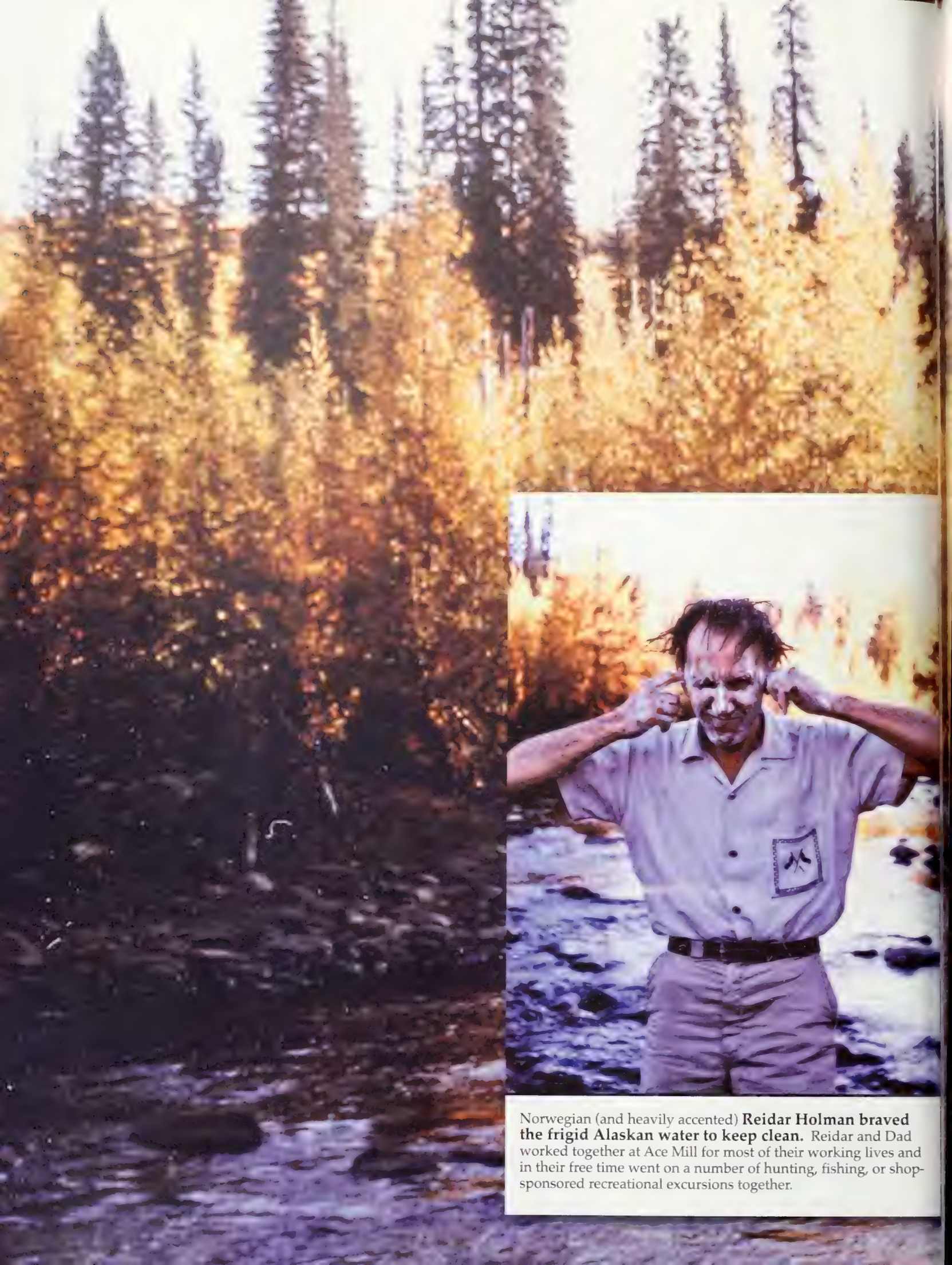
"Just let me in," I gasped.

Then while LaVel proceeded down the road, I related the story. Reidar had been powerless to stop LaVel. And neither LaVel nor Lauris had heard me call.

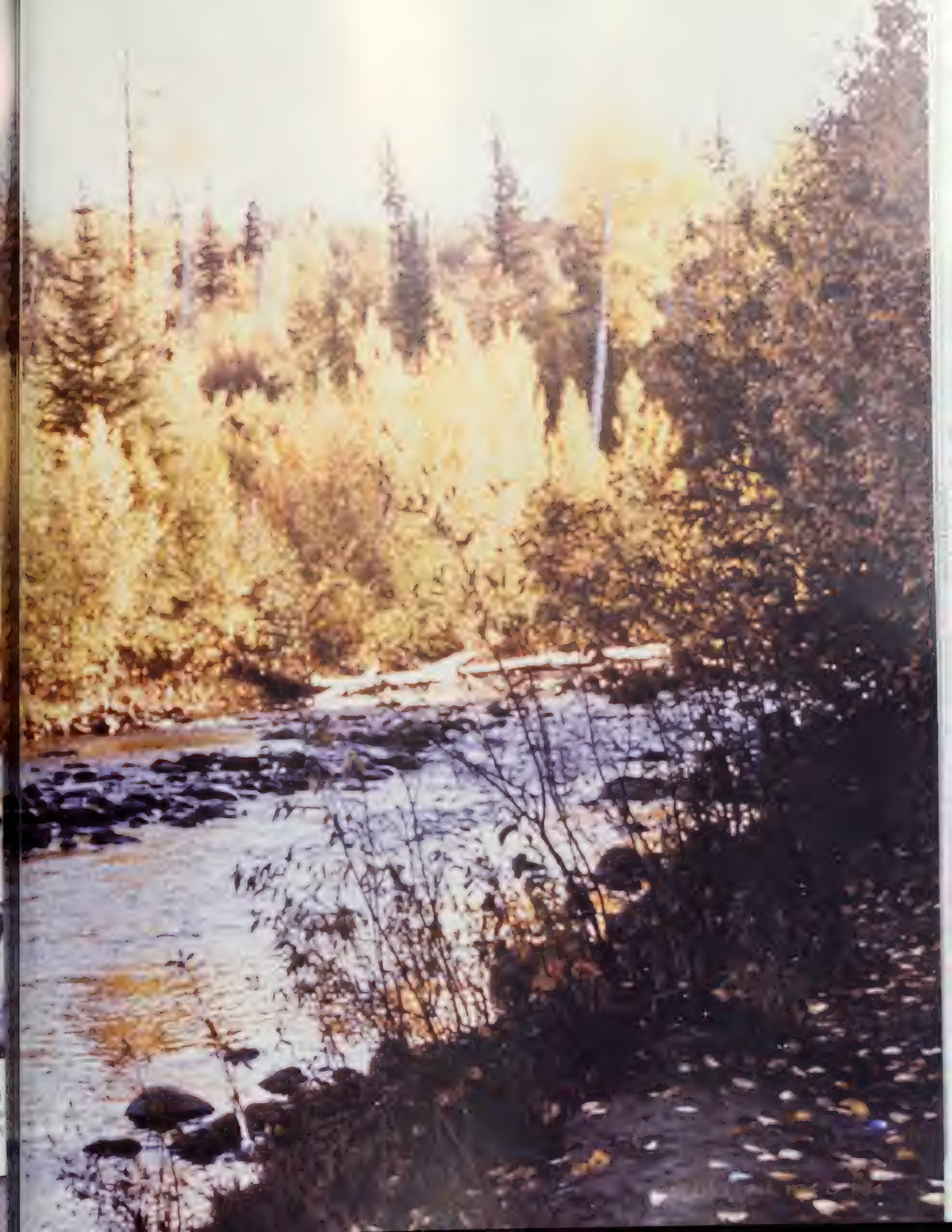
I'm glad I had a cap and that my one-shot chance at success was positive.



The **"Alaska or Bust" bunch stand beside Reidar's 1965 GMC truck** and trailer, which he customized for this trip, 17 Sept 1966. The photo was taken as the hunters were about to embark on their long journey north. Left to right: Lauris Davis, LaVel Davis, Reidar Holman, and Versal Davis.



Norwegian (and heavily accented) **Reidar Holman braved the frigid Alaskan water to keep clean.** Reidar and Dad worked together at Ace Mill for most of their working lives and in their free time went on a number of hunting, fishing, or shop-sponsored recreational excursions together.



1974 - Floating the Yukon River

(12 July - 21 Aug.)
Versal, Thelma, Debra & Duane Davis



Mom, Deb (holding Coalie), and Dad pose by their camper-boat rig in the driveway of their Logan home on Friday, 12 July, 1974, before beginning a six-week adventure to Alaska.

Immediately after the photo was taken, they headed to points north stopping first at Camp Hunt on the shore of Bear Lake to pick up Duane at the conclusion of his week-long stay at boy scout camp. The family's ensuing journey took them to the tip of Alaska — only 30 miles from the Arctic Circle — and back. Six days of the adventure were spent floating 180 miles down the Yukon River.

They drove 8,884 miles on their Alaska trek and according to Dad's meticulous log, his truck, which was pulling a boat trailer, used 720 gallons of gas, averaging 12.34 miles per gallon. Total fuel cost was $450.00 with an average of 62.5 cents per gallon.



Inset Photo: **Duane at boy scout camp** at Bear Lake, 12 July, 1974.

Anticipation

Dad's trip log
Sunday, 7 July (at home)

After several false starts, years of planning, and many moments of study, we have finally reached the week prior to our leaving. . . . Preparations for this trip have been numberless and surmounting the many obstacles concerning finances and physical arrangements have taken a great deal of effort and sacrifice on the part of all of us. But we now are prepared and expect to make the journey a pleasant experience that should be worthwhile. Hopefully it will provide us with enjoyment, travel knowledge, relaxation, and a family togetherness which will be enduring. . . . So, Canada and Alaska, here come the Davises. We hope we are welcome now and will be welcome in the future.

Points of Interest Along Points Northward

13 July — **St. Anthony, Idaho**, to visit Dad's brother, Wayne Davis (known better as Pat), and his sister, Vera Loveland, and their spouses, Myrtle and Bert. This was to be the last time Dad saw Pat for he died of a heart attack a week before their return from Alaska.

16 July — **Spokane, Washington**, to see the 1974 World Exposition. Dad was under impressed describing it as "Rotten," with the exception of the Book of Mormon and Russian Pavilions. However, Duane begged to differ. He loved the bumper cars.[4]

18 July — **Tete Jaune Junction**, British Columbia. Radio reports of a 200-mile length of the Alcan Highway being washed out by heavy rains cause them to reconsider their plans. They decided to tour Jasper,

Banff and Glacier Parks then head home. A huge disappointment![5]

20 July — **Standoff, British Columbia,** on the Belly River, to see an authentic Blackfoot Indian Pow Wow. The Indians, encamped in about 50 teepees, were of the Blood Tribe.

25 July — **Dawson Creek, British Columbia,** where they commenced driving the newly repaired Alcan Highway, which had just reopened after 300 miles of it had been washed out and closed because of unusually heavy rains and flooding.

29 July — **Dawson City, Yukon Territory,** an historic, gold-rush, boom town nestled in a cove at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers.

31 July - 2 Aug — Alone, Dad drove the camper **from Eagle to Circle,** left it there, **then flew back to Eagle** via mail plane to rejoin tent campers Mom, Deb, and Duane and begin their float down the Yukon River.



Dad's brother, Don Wayne (commonly known as Pat) Davis and his wife, Myrtle. Of this photograph Mom wrote: *One of the last pics we have of Pat and Myrtle. Shy Pat hated to have his picture taken. This was at our home in Logan. Wayne had had severe heart trouble for several years. He'd had tests in S.L., but refused to have the recommended surgery. So he bolstered his failing heart with nitroglycerine tablets. A-Versal, Deb, Duane and I had left for Alaska on 12th July, we had purposely gone thru St. A. and stopped in to see almost immobilized Pat at their trailer home northeast of Chester near his beloved Fall River. On the day Pat died Myrtle tried to get word to us [in Alaska] via police, but failed. We didn't know until 21 Aug. when we returned through St. Anthony.*

Mom and Dad at a campground near Salmo, Canada, just a few miles across the border, 16 July 1974.



On the River

2 Aug — **Eagle, Alaska.** Finally, the Davis family pushed off from shore in their 14-foot, wide-beamed, V-prowed, aluminum boat, a conveyance the Alaskans called the "funny little lake boat." They also relied on "Chub," a big black rubber raft to navigate and haul supplies. Mom wrote: . . . *[we] bobbed swiftly along on this strangely silent river: no swishing; no chuckling-water sounds, just various degrees of a hissing sound. . . . That's exactly how the Yukon sounds — a hissing in the more compressed, swiftly flowing areas; a barely audible hissing in the tranquil areas. The hissing is caused by the rubbing together of the vast amount of glacial silt carried by the Yukon, making it a gray, metallic color.*

Once that first day they stopped to investigate an area along the bank of the river but were swarmed by mosquitoes. Mom wrote: *Versal optimistically doused himself with repellant and decided to do a bit of exploring. He returned in about an hour, driven back by the mosquitoes in spite of the repellant. They hover in clouds, droning clouds. The only escape was out on the river, in the tents, or on wide-open sand bars.*

3 Aug — **Second day on the Yukon.** Mom: *[Our] traveling was effortless, quiet, relaxing: just we 4 and this immense river and vast wild country. We floated deceptively fast.*

4 Aug — **Third day on the Yukon.** Mom: *Having camped overnite on an island partially wooded but with one barren area, we awoke to an overcast fast Sunday. We 4 held our own fast meeting with Versal presiding, conducting, and also blessing the sacrament, which Duane (a deacon) passed. We bore our testimonies and continued our reading in The Way to Perfection. After the meeting we retired to our little blue tents to rest a while in the lovely solitude.*

Moose In Camp

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 69)

It was Sunday; the weather was glorious; and all was calm as we rested in our small mountaineer tents. Earlier in the day we had held a short sacrament service and had also cooked a good meal.

Deb and Duane were in one tent and Thelma and I



vere in the other. These homes away from home vere situated on a sandy beach area of the Yukon River. We were miles and miles from any other people ve knew about. This area was wild and very remote. There were signs of wildlife — many tracks of bear, beaver, fox, wolf, and Alaskan moose.

Coalie, our little black dog, was lying near the flap opening of Duane and Deb's tent. Suddenly, the dog growled a bit then leaped toward the opening. Exiting from the tent Coalie ran toward the timber area. She barked excitedly as she went. All of us in the tents peered out to see what was taking place.

Our brave watchdog was close on the heels of two full-grown moose which had ventured right among us.

This account may not seem unusual but the fact is demonstrated and proven here that, because of the few people in these north woods, the animals show little fear of man.

On another occasion I actually walked amid seven head of cow moose. None ran. They simply yielded as I walked among them.

Following Coalie's fruitless chase of the two moose Deb sat in her tent and drew this humorous depiction of the event, 4 Aug. 1974.



5 Aug — **Fourth day on the Yukon.** Mom: *I'm sitting in the aluminum boat which is pulled up on a gravel bar (but still in the water — the beautifully crystal clear water) at the mouth of the Nation River. I've just had quite a thrill — a dark brown wolf walked out of the willows and tall grass about 150 yards away downstream on the Yukon side, strolled along the open rocky bank, stopping and investigating among the rocks. Finally it drank from the Yukon and meandered back in the general direction from which it had come. Just before it reentered the willows, a wailing howl came from up the Nation Valley. The wolf sat on his haunches and howled in answer, then strolled on, disappearing into the tall yellow grass.*

I've been sitting here alone in the boat for quite a while quietly writing this log while Versal, who exuberantly left to show Deb & Duane how to catch grayling, has been fishing.

They Came Down Instead

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 67)

I had often read about the Arctic Grayling. It is a north country fish living in clear fresh water. At one point during our memorable float down the mighty Yukon we had stopped where the Nation River flows into the Yukon.

I left Thelma and walked about one mile upstream along the tumbling Nation River. At a likely spot I tied a small Wepps spinner to my spinning outfit. This, I cast into the clear but roily water. Immediately I hooked a fish which I reeled in. After several casts I soon had seven or eight nice grayling. This was fun but easy. I did not know I was preparing a perplexing problem.

Two or three days later I was desiring to catch some more Arctic grayling. We had camped on Brushkance Creek, which crosses the Denali Road near Mt. McKinley National Park.

Supposing the fish to be easily caught, as I had done so previously, I rigged up my fly pole. Confidently, I walked downstream for a short way and expertly tossed the fly into a deep, swirling body of water.

Immediately a beautiful dark object broke the surface of the water close to my artificial fly. I jerked to set the hook — no fish.

Well, I tried again — same action — same negative result. A third time — no fish for supper!

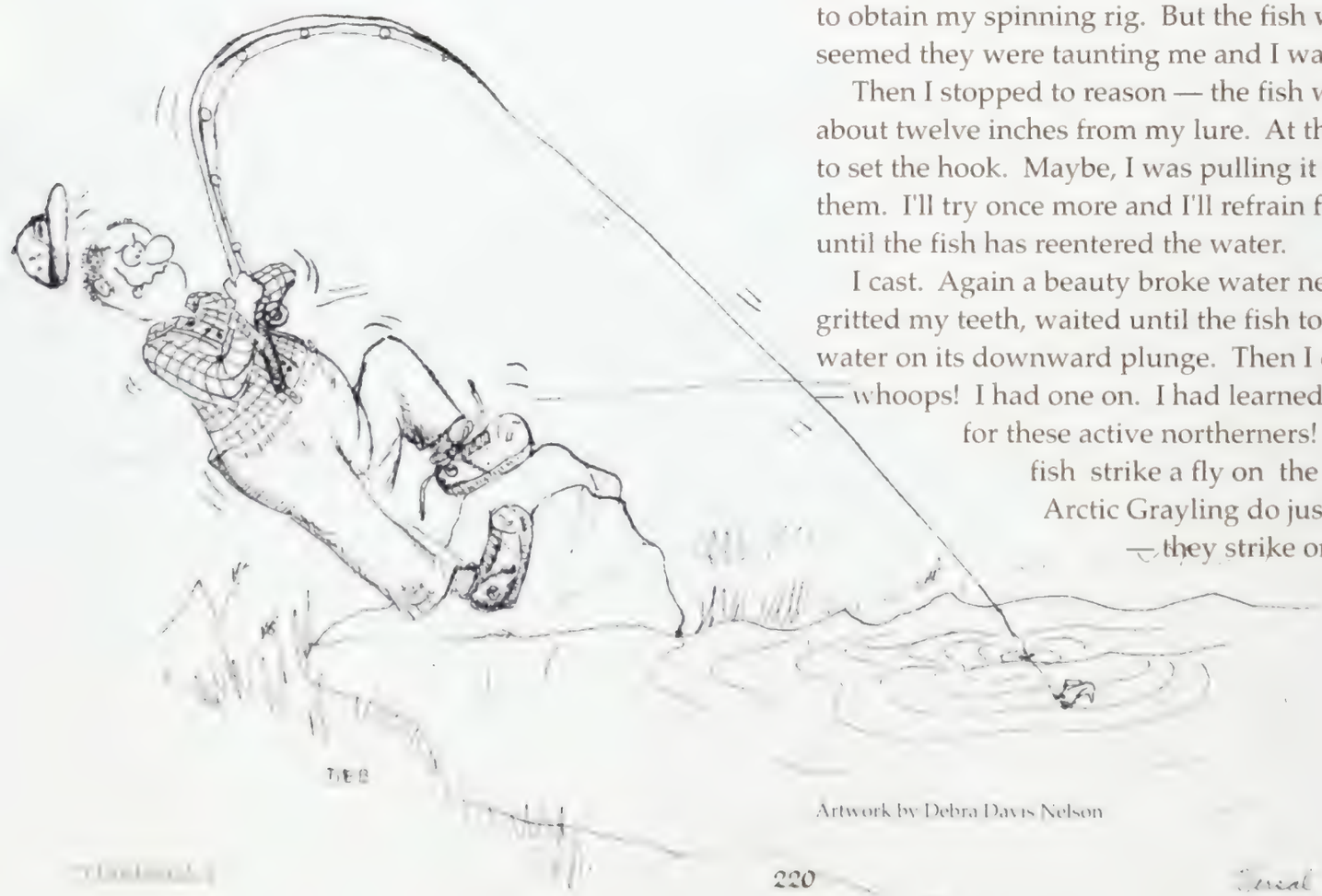
Supposing that perhaps the hook was broken, I inspected it — nothing wrong.

I'll try another pool — same story.

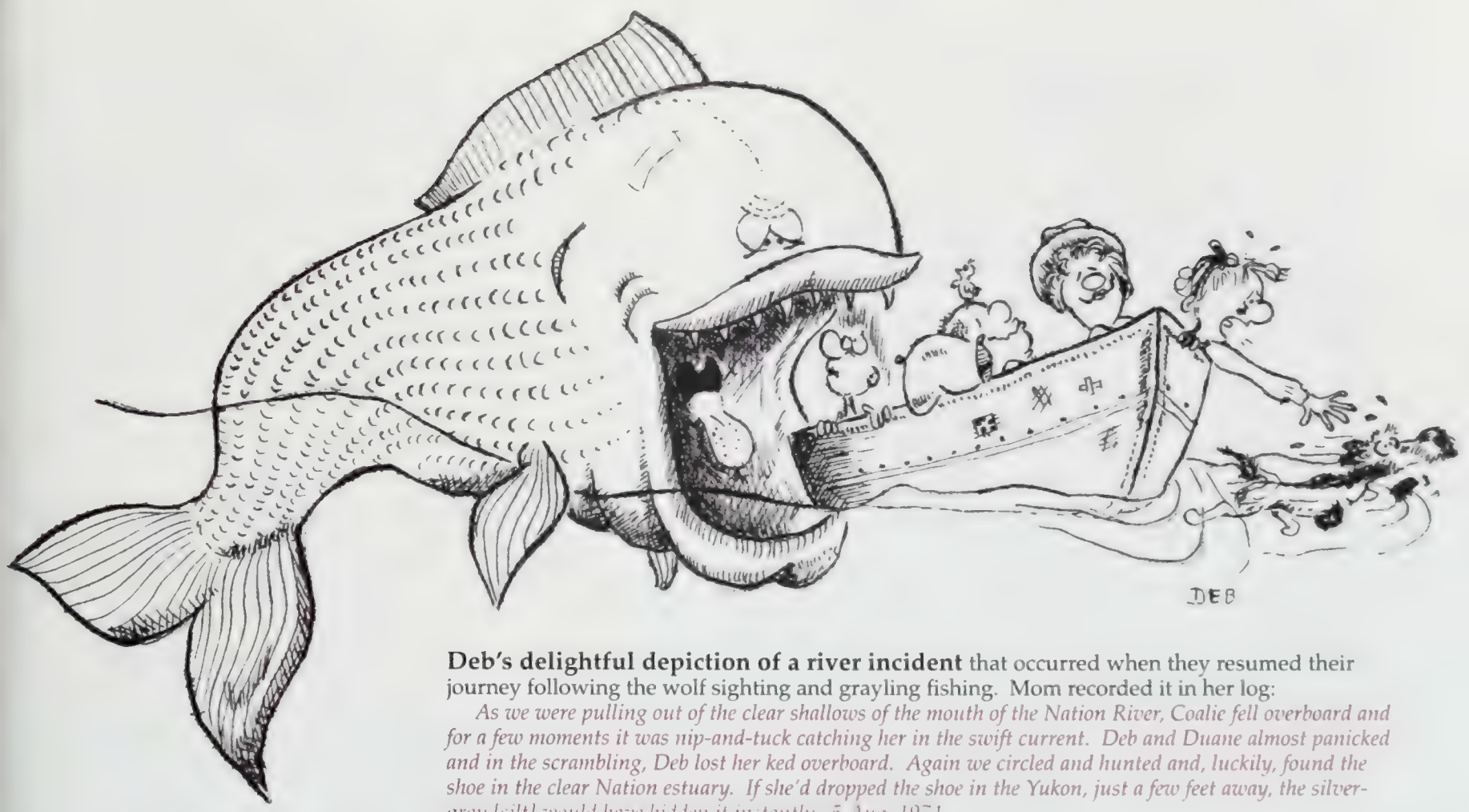
I remembered my easy success when I used the underwater spinner and I almost went back to the camp to obtain my spinning rig. But the fish were here and it seemed they were taunting me and I was frustrated.

Then I stopped to reason — the fish were rising about twelve inches from my lure. At this point I tried to set the hook. Maybe, I was pulling it away from them. I'll try once more and I'll refrain from pulling until the fish has reentered the water.

I cast. Again a beauty broke water near my hook. I gritted my teeth, waited until the fish touched the water on its downward plunge. Then I quickly pulled — whoops! I had one on. I had learned how to fly fish for these active northerners! Whereas most fish strike a fly on the way up, Arctic Grayling do just the opposite — they strike on the way down.



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson

Deb's delightful depiction of a river incident that occurred when they resumed their journey following the wolf sighting and grayling fishing. Mom recorded it in her log:

As we were pulling out of the clear shallows of the mouth of the Nation River, Coalie fell overboard and for a few moments it was nip-and-tuck catching her in the swift current. Deb and Duane almost panicked and in the scrambling, Deb lost her ked overboard. Again we circled and hunted and, luckily, found the shoe in the clear Nation estuary. If she'd dropped the shoe in the Yukon, just a few feet away, the silver-gray [silt] would have hidden it instantly. 5 Aug. 1974.

Sunday, 4 Aug. 1974. **Mom, Deb and Coalie (laying across Deb's legs) relax following their family sacrament service and testimony meeting.** Mom is shown embroidering quilt blocks, which eventually ended up as a cherished quilt in my (Twila's) home.



6 Aug — **Fifth day on the Yukon.** The Davises investigated a cabin near the river, which Dad described in his log: *It proved to be very old yet reasonably serviceable. There were several pieces of crude furniture in it and a neat supply of cooking and eating gear was provided. Even a supply of wood for the tired and perhaps cold traveler was neatly piled in a corner. Outside was an old kitchen range of questionable antiquity. Several of these cabin outposts exist and are generally respected and kept up by travelers such as we. It is a "code of the North" to provide for any one passing through. A note asking anyone using the facility to replace the wood was posted.*

According to our maps we had very leisurely-but-rapidly covered about 50 miles of river.

7 Aug — **Sixth day on the Yukon.** Dad: *After proceeding down-river for 2 or 3 hours, we encountered a strange object on the river horizon. I told Mom that it resembled a floating box. She said it was a white sail. After about an hour of floating toward it, we discovered that it was a long, low barge with a cabin superstructure. It was loaded with fuel barrels, a "cat" tractor, a truck, and various other gear. It slowed down until it passed us. Its wake was really rough.*

. . . We finally ended our river experience by pulling up to a loading area [at Circle, Alaska] and pulling our boats up near the bank. . . . Will be heading back [home] tomorrow. This spot is the farthest point north in this hemisphere that permits car or truck travel. Only 30 miles from the Arctic Circle.

Points of Interest While Heading Home

8 Aug— **Birch Creek Bridge camp site in Circle.** Discovered annoying cousins to mosquitoes. Mom wrote: *Last nite, after crawling into bed [in the camper] we had an invasion of NoSeeUms, which are so small they come right thru the screen windows. We only see them when they glint thru light at certain angles, but their bite is very discernable; and the mosquito-coil fumes don't seem to phase them. Versal sprayed the screen with repellent, then said "Phooey," covered up and went to sleep, as we all did. But this morning I awoke scratching my arm and shoulder which*

Below: The family's **traveling/camping/boating rig at a typical campsite** during their 1974 Alaska trip.

Mom is preparing food at the picnic table on the left; Deb is leaning against the camper; and Duane is shaking out a sleeping bag. Dad is the one taking the photo.

Inset: **Coalie relaxes on a camp chair.**



had been uncovered and I had a sizeable lump or 2 on my face. Duane, too, was scratching. Then, later, when I poured some hot water into the dish rinse pan, I found many tiny, dark NoSeeUms apparently attracted to the heat, or water, or white pan, drowned. We're just glad that NoSeeUms don't seem to be as prolific, or universal, or persistent as mosquitoes.

Dad's log: *[We took] a last look at the mighty Yukon River and left on the 160 mile drive to Fairbanks. This road is simply a dirt graded affair that winds up, over, and around the rugged terrain of central Alaska. As we proceeded down one of the narrow mtn. passes, I lost control of the truck and veered to the right side, which was fortunately the mtn. side. The truck and camper literally bounced on its side against the mtn. and in so doing bent the metal work and panels on the same side. However, no mechanical damage was sustained and so we more carefully continued on toward Fairbanks.*

. . . we stayed that evening at a campground in Chatanika. It was here that we learned by radio that Pres. Nixon had resigned and Vice Pres. Ford became our nation's leader. Needless to say there was quite a stir among the various camping groups in the area.

10 Aug— **Mount McKinley National Park.** Took a day-long, 160 mile tour bus trip through the park lasting 10 hours. Saw incredible scenery, including *"big, broad, dirty Muldrow Glacier, and many animals: 3 herds of all sheep, several moose, many majestic caribou, and seven grizzlies."*

12 Aug— **Along the Denali Highway.** Picked wild blueberries — *"great big Alaskan blueberries that are so delicious"*(as described by Dad) — and made two gallons of blueberry jam to take back home. Had blueberry pancakes for several days.

13 Aug— **Tok Alaska.** Replenished groceries and purchased a few souvenirs then proceeded east and crossed into Canada. Proceeded through Yukon Territory toward beautiful Kluane Lake, which Dad described as *"immensely beautiful terrain, a joy to travel over."*

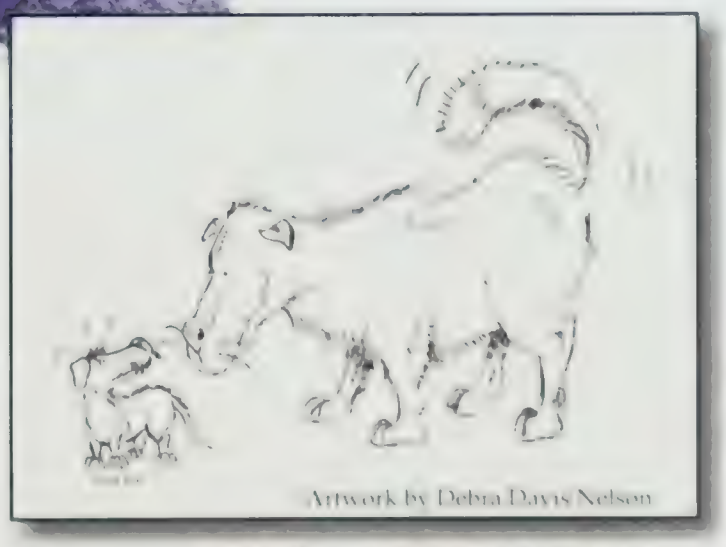
18 Aug. — **Willam's Lake, British Columbia.** Assembled with about 200 other LDS church members for church services then drove 35 miles to Kamloops to camp for the night. Mom wrote: *Played Rummy after a thorough ranting and tickling session almost put Duane out of commission, so he just watched and laughed, while Versal rummied again and again and beat Deb & me thoroughly. Read chapter from Way to Perfection together.*

21 Aug. — **Home!** And back to the real world with its ups (the birth of a new grandson, Jared LaVel Clark), and downs (Grandma Hall's deteriorating health, conflicts between Brian & Jackie, and imminent tumor surgeries for Deb).



10 Aug. 1974. **At Mount McKinley National Park** Deb was charmed by the huge, friendly Malamute sled dogs, which performed in sled pulling demonstrations along with their smaller, Alaskan Husky cousins.

At right is **Deb's depiction of little Coalie and one of the Malamutes.** In reality, though, Coalie never encountered the big dogs for the family had left her in the camper while they toured Mount McKinley Park. When they returned late that night they found the camper in shreds. Coalie had become anxious during their long absence and had torn things apart.



Alaska Trip 1974 & 1984

1984 - Casual Sightseeing

(22 Aug. - 14 Sept.)

Versal & Thelma Davis and Wendell & Fern Virgin

Yesterday, Aug 21, Mom & I finished packing our AMC [pickup] at Logan. After doing so we drove to the Logan Temple and attended a session there. We then drove back home, picked up a thing or two, had a departure prayer, and then headed north to Smithfield. At that place we remembered that we were supposed to vote [in a local and state primary election], so we returned to Logan and did our civic duty. Again we headed back north and continued until we reached Idaho Falls, where we stayed overnight with Tam & John & kids, [then] we continued on to Sugar-Salem where we joined Wendell & Fern Virgin . . . after prayer we started north on our way to wherever."

Changes Along the Alcan Highway

Dad couldn't help but compare this trip with his two previous ones up through Canada and Alaska. He commented: *The roads were generally good though some construction was evident in various areas. Almost all of the Alcan is now paved, which makes driving more pleasant but much of the frontier effect is now gone. The main cities are spreading and huge areas are being cleared for farming and ranching. For the general traveler, however, I must admit that the roads, clean campgrounds, availability of gas and food, telephone, and tourist information is conducive to better traveling.*

Mom, too, reflected on the new pros and cons of Alaskan travel: *The most negative aspect of all — and we had been forewarned — was the drastic change in the Alcan Highway. No longer does it wind and wander over the easiest grades and rover-lake-creek banks the young soldier-builders could clear. It has been straightened! Huge caterpillars and bulldozers have whittled mountains, moved vast tons of earth; blasted rocks are common. The work is still going on with the most massive equipment I've ever seen! And, as one park ranger in talking to us 10 years ago feared: "It'll be the longest raceway in the world!" No longer do trees hover close along the Alcan; they've been bulldozed and the roadsides are clean-cleared, often for 100 ft. on each side. No longer do passing trucks flip rocks with deadly accuracy at windows, windshields, headlights. Few vehicles wear the screen front-protectors. The road is paved."*



Dad's log, Thursday, Sept. 6, 1984:

This morning, after our night's rest at the Moose Creek Campground, we continued on our northeast drive on the Glenn Hiway, which threads through the Matanuska Valley [near Anchorage, Alaska] and then between beautiful, scenic mountains. This road offers a great panorama of mountains, rivers, streams, lakes, immense glaciers, various trees, and colorful flowers. Such grandeur, so far as I am concerned, makes life very worthwhile. It also justifies our trip into this great land.





Dad took this photograph at **a roadside picnic area**, which he described as "typical," along the highway leading north in British Columbia.

The Weather

Unlike his previous two trips, in which sunny days were interspersed with occasional brief storms, Dad wrote the weather for this third trip was mostly rain, sleet, snow, and mist with very cool temperatures. However the two couples brushed off the inconvenience of poor weather and thoroughly enjoyed their Alaskan adventure.

In fact, Mom wrote the cold weather had several silver (but in this case "gold") linings: *After a week of rain and snow, there was a hard frost and the brush and trees put on their gorgeous fall colors for us. We were delighted. And there were no mosquitoes at all. That story that the old man told me 10 years ago is true! The mosquitoes do leave with the first snowfall! And we'd really come equipped for them: repellent, long-sleeved shirts, polyester*

Compatible Companions

Dad and Mom had been friends with Wendell and Fern Virgin since their St. Anthony days and their shared bond had remained strong through decades of life changes and distance. Their compatibility, tested and true, added to the enjoyment of their long road trip together.

Dad wrote: *Wendell and Fern were very cheerful and congenial to travel with . . . . Perhaps they were a little disappointed because of the bad weather we encountered but they did not complain. They were truly good traveling companions.*

Mom agreed: *Our trip with Wendell and Fern Virgin was a complete success as far as compatibility was concerned. Our backgrounds, our ideals are so similar. Unbeknown to each other, we'd each packed 4 Bks. Of M. to help us do a little proselyting. We managed to give 5 of them to fellow travelers; so many of these are elderly people, usually*



Wendell and Fern Virgin huddle in the cold **with Mom near Fort Nelson in British Columbia** in August — (summer!).

fairly affluent — just wandering looking for fun, for something exciting to do. We found Wendell to be quite a storyteller. Our evenings were spent studying the Bk. Of M. (they'd brot their manual, too!), listening to and often recording many of Wendell's stories, playing rook, visiting, comparing missionary experiences. They served in Georgia and Tenn. And found the subversive Ku Klux Klan as threatening as some of our Indians. Shortly after they came home their Branch Pres. was shot, probably by the Klan.[11]

Animal Sightings

Mom described the always exciting views of wild animal life sometimes enjoyed in Alaska: *In our modest 1978 GMC truck and camper (the Virgin's), we often stopped overnite at wayside rest stops or gravel pits (left by the road construction), or creek banks, or wherever. Thus we sometimes saw wildlife missed by the more elite travelers who sought out the formal parks. Of course, we had to invent our own restrooms.*

Early one morning Versal had gone one direction along a creek bank, I another. Soon I hear him call softly, "C'mere Thelma. Hurry." I did. A big beaver had come thru a culvert under the highway, had waddled down the little stream that flowed from the culvert to the creek. It had come within 2 feet of Versal before it saw him. With the customary "Whop" of its tail it dove into a little pond by the creek. We watched it for some time[12]*. . . . Most of the animals we saw were in Denali Natl. Park on the 10-hour shuttle drive to the foot of Mt. McKinley and back: sandhill cranes swarming for migration high in the sky above Wonder Lake with their haunting cries attracting us. — hundreds of them. Bears (grizzlies), many moose, caribou, grouse, marmots. Other places we saw mountain goats, tamely down along the roadside; deer, antelope, and tree squirrels everywhere.*[13]



As the four travelers were driving in upper Canada, they noticed a **black bear cub hungrily eating white clover** by the side of the road. They stopped to watch and Dad took this photo. Sept. 10, 1984.

Mom wrote: *Another time we stopped by a black bear cub that was grazing, yes grazing, on sweet clover by the roadside. It totally ignored us. We drove on.*[14]



Leaving Alaska Behind

On Friday, 7 Sept. 1984, Dad & Mom and Wendell & Fern crossed from Alaska into Canada on their way homeward. Dad nostalgically wrote in his log that evening: *This morning we left in crisp but beautiful weather as we drove toward the boundary between Alaska and Canada. After having driven through U.S. customs, I had pangs of sadness as I realized that this was probably the last time I would ever look back and see Alaska. To some people such means little but to me I've really and truthfully enjoyed my visits to this big, beautiful state. It is not the frontier that it once was but it is yet awesome and beacons to me.*[1]

Photo this page: **Ktuane Lake, Yukon Territory, 1984**





The Next Big Adventure: Mom's Battle with Cancer

Mom had been battling uterine cancer before the Alaska trip. She'd had surgery months earlier and was in the midst of chemotherapy treatments as they embarked on their trip north.

By pre-arrangement she had two of her chemo shots at the Dimond Medical Center in Anchorage, Alaska — one on Sept. 4, the next on the 5th. Dr. Johnson, her cancer specialist at the University of Utah Medical Center back home had given her the okay for the Alaska trip but had told her to watch for spotting, a bad sign. Unfortunately, Mom began bleeding on Sept. 6th, just after leaving Anchorage, but she waited a few days before telling Dad. After she did he recorded the following in his journal:

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 1984

William's Lake, British Columbia

As I write this I am saddened by a report from Thelma that she is showing signs of distress regarding her physical problem. Things have been wonderful to this point and I'd hoped that we would complete the trip without such entering into our activities. She feels badly about this and so do I but we have to face facts and so we elected to tell Wendell & Fern. They were very wonderful about the whole thing. It was decided that we would now travel quite steadily toward home, going by the shortest and best route. . . . Wendell and I administered to her.

The Davises and Virgins returned to their homes three days later. Mom's final notation regarding the Alaska trip was aptly written as a summary as well as a bulwark for what lay ahead:

One of the most touching parts of the whole trip was up on the Denali [Highway]. At one of our stops Versal disappeared for a long time. When he came back he was exhausted. Later he told me: "When I was here in 1966 with Vel, Lauris, and Reidar Holman, I climbed up to be alone and pray for you and our family. I went up there again today for the same purpose, to the same place."[17]

Mom had her second cancer surgery on Sept. 28. At that time she and Dad were told her condition was incurable, that she would die from the cancer.



Versal in Logan Canyon, ca. winter 1967-68

Chapter Nine

Mid-Life in Logan

1966-1980

Hobbies have taken their share of my time. Deer hunting was an annual affair for many years. Fishing has always been a relaxing sport. However, I must admit that hunting has almost faded entirely from my realm of desire. I have grown to detest killing of wildlife of any kind. I really can't understand the change but it is true and I feel very good about it. I still have several guns and lots of ammunition but unless a serious real need for their use arises, I perhaps will never actively use them again.

But as one phase passes, another takes its place. Photography has very effectively filled this void and the myriad pictorial records I have prove this. In fact, I enjoy "shooting" with a camera much more than I ever did with a gun. This activity has proven invaluable in my genealogical research, also.[1]

Dad penned the passage above in his 1977 autobiography (which is included at the end of this book). However, his transition from shooting with a gun to shooting with a camera began more than a decade earlier, in the mid-60s, when Weldon Kofoed, a fellow ward member and manager of S. E. Needham Jewelers in Logan, gave him a "good deal" on a camera. Dad's fascination with photography took root and grew and it wasn't long before his "gun room" downstairs was turned into a "dark room" complete with his own film developing equipment. The satisfaction of watching his own images slowly emerge in trays of developer bath became addicting. Thereafter his camera went everywhere he did. The creative satisfaction photography provided was a natural compliment to Dad's love for outdoor exploration.

Dad in his basement darkroom, December 1967.

Brian was serving his mission in California during the time Dad switched from guns to cameras. Mom mentioned the change in a letter to him dated 23 April 1964

Dad I tell you that he [Versal] is quite a camera bug now and have a lot to studying about it just as he used to about guns, reloading, etc. He hardly ever passes with his guns anymore and talks of selling his reloading equipment. He has really acquired a little camera equipment and keeps his eye on many all of the time.[2]

Genealogy

Dad's photography not only enhanced his appreciation of nature, it also fit hand-in-glove with another new avocation he picked up about the same time — genealogy research.

He didn't seek out genealogy work, though; it was Mom's idea. And he resisted at first.

In 1966, Mom took a genealogy "how-to" class from a husband-wife team at the genealogy library in the basement of the Logan Tabernacle. She normally went alone but one night she asked Dad to go with her. He told her he was tired, he didn't like genealogy, and going to a boring class was the last thing he wanted to do that night. Mom insisted, Dad resisted, and a loud argument resulted. I remember cringing at the tension in the house. To make peace, he finally went but the black cloud that existed between them as they walked out the door that night was almost visible.

What a reversal when they returned! Dad was on fire with the "Spirit of Elijah"[3] — he'd been bitten hard by the genealogy bug. From that time forth he and Mom BOTH eagerly attended weekly genealogy classes at the Tabernacle, occasional genealogy workshops in Salt Lake, and yearly genealogy conferences at BYU. And when they became proficient, they served as genealogy missionaries (and eventually as supervisors) in the Tabernacle's Logan Genealogy Library for many years.

To supplement his library research, Dad used his camera on numerous trips to family history sites, courthouses, and homes of extended family members to gather information. He and Mom collaborated on various family history projects through the rest of their years together.

Thinking back to his own parents' love for family history and temple work, Dad wrote in 1977: *I launched into a field that has involved a tremendous amount of study and application. This was genealogical research. I hope my mother is pleased by this effort. She certainly was a great researcher herself. I have been a supervisor for almost 15 years in the Cache Branch Library.*[4]



Mom takes a turn as receptionist in the Logan Genealogy Library in the Tabernacle; she also assisted library patrons with their family history questions, May 1967.

In a letter dated 21 Oct. 1972, Mom expressed her love of and commitment to genealogy work: *I'm glad winter is coming, for I want to go to S. L. [a] the Genealogical Library about once a month. I'm enjoying my genealogy so much now that it's awfully hard to leave it alone to do some of the other things I should do; it's more fascinating than any detective story as one picks up clues here and there. I'm at long last getting really organized and progressing.*



Dad (left) helps patrons with their genealogy research at the Cache Branch Library located in the Logan Tabernacle's basement on Main Street in Logan, Utah, May 1967.

Photo Identification, Opposite Page:

Versal and Thelma are standing in the center at the rear with Grandma Hall in front of them. The Davis children in order of age: LaVel and Colleen are at the left with their four daughters in matching dresses: Corette and Lynette (standing), Laureen and Shauna (sitting). Brent is sitting with Inge standing above him and 8-month-old Estelle between his legs. Brian and Jackie are standing at the far right with two-year-old Kim sitting on the grass and four-month-old Deone in Brian's arms. Twila is standing holding two-month-old Trisha with Richard behind her right shoulder. Tami (pregnant with Lorin) is sitting in the center front with John above her. Lauris (16) stands next to Thelma in the rear. Deb (13) is holding the family dog, Rusty. And Duane (8) is sitting in the front with Brent and Inge's dog, Nicki.

Two More Romances — Two More Weddings



Richard & Twila

Richard Bird began dating Twila when she was a freshman at Utah State University. They were married the following summer on 3 July 1967.



Tami & John

John Clark became romantically involved with Tami during her senior year in high school. They were married after her graduation on 1 July 1968.

The Versal and Thelma Davis extended family — eight children, five in-laws & eight grandchildren, plus Thelma's mother, Ruby Hall — in front of the family home in Logan, Utah, on Easter Sunday, 27 April 1969.



Six Stories Down

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 47)

The following true incident, occurred in Logan, Utah about 1970. At the time, I was assisting with some crane work while some air conditioner units were being installed on the roof of the newly-constructed library building on the U.S.U. campus.

"Just go over to the edge and point your arm and finger away from the building. Reed will know what to do." I said this to the plumber with whom I had been working.

This directive became the go-ahead signal for a thrill which I hope never occurs again.

Reed Johnson, the Raymond Construction Co. crane operator and I were doing some lifting and placement of the heavy air conditioner equipment. This material was being hoisted to the top of the new library addition. I had been acting as signal man, while Reed operated the large crane. This huge machine had a boom length of 110 feet.

Our work had been routine and having finished, we were now free to leave the construction site. I was standing on top of a steel-plated protection unit. This was some distance from the edge of the building and I was hidden from Reed's view below.

The crane cable with the "headache knob" was by me as it hung loosely in the air. I grasped the large cable, then jumped to a sitting position on the large, steel knob. I crossed my legs into a lock pattern, then gave the directive to the plumber.

He walked across the roof, which was well below me and peered over the edge. Reed was looking up and responded to the plumber's signal to swing over and then lower the hook.

I grasped the cable tightly though I was not frightened. I had done this many times as a means to a quick, safe descent to the ground. All went well as I swung horizontally across the roof. Then — to my instant horror, I knew I was in for a free fall!

I gripped the cable ever tighter and locked my legs more firmly around it where it passed between my limbs to the ten-inch steel bail upon which I was sitting.

When I had fallen to within about ten feet of the ground, the cable and ball came to a sudden stop. But not me! The downward force caused me to slip over the ball and my hands slipped down the cable to where I had previously been sitting. There in a hanging position, I swung back and forth.



Dad sits atop a huge cylinder (with the crane's "headache knob" above his head), ca. 1970.
The cylinder is being hoisted to the roof of a building under construction. Reed Johnson, no doubt, is operating the crane.

Then, very slowly, I was lowered to the ground where I quickly and gratefully stood upon my feet. I glanced toward my friend, Reed, as he climbed from the control cab of the crane. His face was ashen white and he shook his head as he walked back and forth.

"I can't believe it! I can't believe it!" he repeatedly exclaimed. "Oh no, no, no!" He added.

My face was pretty white and sober also. I staggered over to him just as he said, "Verse, I didn't know you were on that thing. I didn't see you until I happened to notice you directly in front of me."

"Well, you sure stopped that hook in a hurry," I offered.

"All I could think of was to slam on the brake," he replied. "Oh, Lordy, I'm glad you're alright!"

We talked of this near-tragedy for many days. I held no ill feelings toward him. In fact, I've ridden the same ball many times since in absolute trust of his ability.



REED JOHNSON, crane operator for the Ace Raymond Construction Co., checks level of micro wave saucer as he lowers it into position against the tower on the top of the Montana States Telephone Co. Building

Photo this page. Dad and Reed Johnson help repair earthquake damage to the Logan Temple using Ace Raymond Construction Company's 110-foot-boom crane, 1965.

The damage resulted from an earthquake (magnitude 5.7) that weakened the temple's masonry. Tami remembered that when the earthquake hit, early in the morning of 30 Aug 1962, Dad was still asleep. The rumbling and shaking woke him up and his first thoughts were that Reed Johnson had come in his bedroom and was shaking his bed![6]

Lauris, who worked at Ace Mill for six years after graduating from high school, remembered a similar incident involving Reed Johnson and Dad and the crane. However, this one was a simple, good-natured prank. He said, *"When those two got together reasoning and caution always went out the window. I remember one time Dad was welding together a new cage for the crane and he and I got in it and Reed hoisted us up high into the sky . . . then left us up there and wouldn't let us down. It was actually kind of fun to stay up there for a while."*[7]

John Clark, Tami's husband, was an Ace Mill employee for a while, too. He said the comradery among Dad, Reed, and the other men at the shop, made working there fun. *"Once Dad showed up at work with a shiny, new, silver lunch box,"* he said, *"He put it proudly down beside the other, more beat-up lunch boxes then made some snidely comment about whose had class and whose didn't. Members of the crew teased Dad about his fancy new lunch box, then someone, I can't remember who, walked over and put his hand in an open can of paint. He returned and placed his paint-covered hand on the top of Dad's lunch box, leaving a perfect full handprint on it. Then it fit in with the others."*[8]

Dad scored his points, too. John said one time Dad brought in a box of chocolates, gave everyone one, then announced no one could have another. To make sure (and with a twinkle in his eye), he picked up all the remaining chocolates one at a time, licked the top of each, and replaced them.[9]

Duane and Brent both worked at Ace Mill with Dad, too, before they moved on to other, more permanent jobs. Brent said Dad became pretty good at sanding and spraying paint or varnish so the mill's products turned out real well. "I didn't particularly like working there, though," he said, " and I always worried about dad who spent a large part of every day in a work area filled with paint and chemical fumes. He wore a protective mask, but I'm sure it didn't help a lot."[10]



Lauris & Dorothy

Lauris and his high school sweetheart, Dorothy Minkler, were married in the Logan Temple on 27 Dec. 1971. He was attending Utah State University at the time, while Dorothy finished her senior year of high school.

Deep Sea Fishing with Warren

Dad typically de-stressed by getting away into the mountains or, more frequently as he got older, going fishing. Most of his fishing forays were to local rivers, lakes and reservoirs but in the spring of 1972, he was introduced to deep sea fishing by his brother, Warren, then living in San Francisco.

After a tough winter suffering with arthritis, stressing over whether to move to the west side of Cache Valley (and finally deciding not to move after all), and feeling generally cooped-up, Dad pulled a week's vacation, loaded the camper, and traveled to northern California to visit Warren and his companion, Madeline Dolan. Mom, Deb, and Duane were in tow.

They did all of the touristy stuff: riding the trolley, dinner in the revolving Crown Room atop the Fairmont Hotel, Fisherman's Wharf, Chinatown, and Golden Gate Park. However, for Dad, Warren's invitation to go deep sea fishing took the cake. Mom wrote:

The grand finale of our visit was an ocean-fishing trip: Warren had chartered the Blue Horizon (at $100) and this was the bait that lured Versal to a big city. Arising at 3 a.m., we packed breakfast and lunch: thermoses of coffee and cocoa, sweet rolls, fried chicken. Driving thru the quiet, darkened city, over the Golden Gate Bridge, and to the also rain-swept Sausalito, we were aboard by daylight with our food hamper safely tucked in the snug little cabin.

But a brisk wind had begun to kick up. Undaunted, the captain and Dennis, his fisherman's helper and lone member of his crew, donned their boots and plastic suits, started the diesel engines, backed carefully from the mooring among hundreds of deserted sister boats, and headed under the Golden Gate (it really looks small and insignificant from a fish-eye view).

But the farther out to sea we got, the braver that wind became. Only one other fishing boat was in sight. For a long time Deb stood bravely at the stern of the boat, while Madeline and I sat in the cabin trying to balance cups and sweet rolls. Warren joined us for a while after he had all the fishing gear ready: huge poles, 20-lb test line, sinkers as big as your fist, clamps to secure the poles to the rail of the boats, anchovies (about 4-6 inches long) for bait, etc.

Warren ate a roll and spilled his cup of coffee twice. I ate a roll and held a cup (glass) of cocoa for ½ hr., trying to figure out how to drink it without slopping it all over, trying to outguess the rolls and swells of the boat, never succeeding.

After a 2 hour run, they idled the engines and put out the poles — 7 of them — one for each of us and one for a sailor on furlough who was the only other passenger. Then we began to troll.

About that time I retreated from the cabin with its wildly waving windows, but I didn't fish for I just plain couldn't stand up on the wildly waving deck. Everyone was clinging to every available secure part of the ship except Versal and Warren — they were staggering back and forth checking the 7 poles, and having a ball.

Poor Duane was leaning over the rail and refused to leave it for the whole rest of the trip. Deb retreated and stayed by me, clinging to the superstructure near the smokestack for it furnished some shelter from the driving rain, as well as a little heat. Our sailor-fisherman disappeared completely; Versal said he was in the men's privy — a little 2' by 2' cubicle — with his head almost down the hole. So the fellows had to use the ladies' one.

Versal and Warren were catching fish (salmon), some were shakers — ones under 20" long — and some keepers.

We were supposed to have an 8-10 hour trip, but the weather got wilder and wilder and, when the waves began to tower over the boat, the captain came down to say he could no longer control the boat at trolling speed, and anyway the coast guard was ordering all small craft to port as a whopping storm was moving in. Versal was the only one not ready to retreat. Nevertheless, that Golden Gate never looked better as we bounced under it at last.

Duane was the only one who actually got seasick (except the sailor — Dennis said he thot that poor guy was going to die), but Deb and I were too queasy to go into the cabin — we had to have the wind in our faces.[11]

Dad's older brother, Warren Corrette Davis.





Dad and his five sons, 4 July 1974.

Beginning in 1974, three of the five Davis brothers — Brent, Brian, and Lauris — established homes in the northwest (Washington and Oregon). Their lure for Dad and Mom to "come visit" often included ocean fishing. Dad enjoyed the trips so much he organized several fishing expeditions for his shop buddies over the next decade. They were practically an annual affair for a number of years.

Arranged according to age in the photo, the Davis menfolk are L-R:

Dad — growing a beard in preparation for his August trip to Alaska (he wanted to look the part of the rugged explorer).
LaVel — lived in Bountiful but traveled widely from Canada to New Mexico for a Salt Lake oil company, secretary of the Intermountain Geologists Association.
Brent — completed master's degree at Indiana University, began new job with the IRS in Mason, Michigan (was transferred to Portland, Oregon in September of this year)
Brian — lived in Logan, worked as a computer operator at USU, took classes towards an advanced degree in math / physics.
Lauris — was about to become a first-time father (Marci born 25 July), earned A's at USU, was a star player on the ward basketball team (regional playoffs at Rick's College), lived in the "Triads" (USU married student apartments.)
Duane — was a good student, entering 8th grade, working on scout merit badges, current passions were roller skating and camping.

Mom, Dad, and Duane pose with trophies they caught in the ocean off the coast of Oregon on a fishing trip with Dad's work buddies and some of their sons and wives — a company of twelve, August 1975. The salmon and sea bass are much larger than the fresh water trout they caught in the southern Idaho reservoirs they normally frequented: Blackfoot, Condie, and Treasureton.



Only Eight Fish

(Flashback, Journal N, p. 71)

Come on Mom. Deb and I are ready to go," I exclaimed as I made a final check of our camping and fishing gear.

"OK, I'll be there in just a minute," Thelma replied.

Soon we were wending our way toward Blackfoot Reservoir, 80 miles north into southeastern Idaho. Reaching there, we set up camp and made a nice campfire. It was now dark and we prepared to stay overnight.

This lake is noted for large trout but catching them is sometimes difficult. This day seemed to be no exception as we waited for some action.

Then Deb's pole quivered. She ran and picked it up.

"Easy, Deb. Let him really have it before you set the hook," I directed.

"Gosh, Dad, he's jerking on it now," she impatiently exclaimed.

I watched the pole, then it bent in a sharp curve. "Now!" I said.

She quickly set the hook and immediately the contest was on.

She reeled in, then with a singing noise the line was pulled back out. Again she reeled. Again the line went out. Then the tiring fish was led into shallow water. I netted it and then, "Mom! Duane (he was along)! Look at this big one!" Deb gleefully shouted.

Sure enough, it weighed nearly five pounds. But soon Mom had another trophy also. Even I caught one. Before we broke camp to leave for home we only had eight fish, but those eight rainbows equaled the legal limit of the three licenses we had. We really had bragging-size fish!



Dad with fish caught at Blackfoot Reservoir, 1974

Mom's Fishing Stories

Fall is in the air here; last nite we had a 28 degree temp. and the mountains are at their color-peak. Last Fri. & Sat. Versal and I fished at Blackfoot Reservoir. Wow! Was the weather — the wind — cold. We'd stake our poles and get back into the snug camper; anyway I did. We caught our limits, but are crying over 4 that got away. We fished with 4 lb. test line (as we always have), but we were latching into such big ones they just popped it — they'd surely make our reels sing.

So, we changed to 8 lb. test (the heaviest we had) and had better luck, in a way. Sat. Morning I caught a 3½ lb. beauty and ten minutes later Versal sang out "Look at my pole!" And he had a whopper on which required 15 minutes of zigging and zagging up and down the shoreline to even bring it close to bank. Just then a bunch of the fellows from the shop arrived (most of our trips turn out to be an "Oh! I forgot to tell you, some of the guys may be up in the morning" affair. But I really enjoy them. They're a genuinely nice bunch of guys, quite different from many of the other fishermen we meet. . . . Anyway, Cliff [Doolittle] jumped out of the pickup and raced down to see Versal land his big fish. Versal gave the pole to Cliff and said, "Let's see what you can do with a really big fish on the other end of the line."

Cliff whooped and hollered and worked the fish on in — it was a 15-lb. carp! Broke the line when they got it on the mud, but Versal waded in and manually shoved it onto shore. Then, wouldn't you know, the wind came up again and blew so hard we had to get the camper (first time we've ever had to), and I made hot postum for the guys. But the

pouring pert related. The shop guys caught 4 (only one 2-pounder) and we all gave up and came home

The previous entry was written in the fall of 1972, when fishing was winding down for the year. The following June, in 1973, Mom recorded:

When spring comes, Versal's urge to get outdoors just explodes and fishing commences. Already, I'm peddling fish all over the neighborhood every week — thank heaven for neighbors who like fish. We're to go to Treasureton Reservoir tonite, the place where we caught such big beauties last year. We drove up there on Idaho opening day; but when we pulled in and saw a veritable city of campers and trailers in the old apple orchard, Versal just drove right on out (you know how we hate crowds anywhere) and to Condie Reservoir, which has been open all year. There was only one lone vehicle, a jeep, there, so there we stayed.

We had to chuckle because 4 of the guys from the shop tagged right along after us in their camper, so we had a regular shop party at Condie and the 7 of us caught 70 fish, our limits (+8 we gave away). Debbie laughed and laughed at the banter, whooping and hollering and kidding. She's becoming an avid fisherwoman, too, though we both lose alot more than we catch, especially when fly fishing.

For instance, I'd been casting my fly-and-bobber in a certain area and getting a strike each time but I just couldn't hook the rascal. At last, in desperation I handed my pole to Versal and exclaimed, "You try it!"

Versal cast exactly once — and caught that fish.

Later, Cliff and the guys pulled alongside us in their boat to tell us they had their limits, to exchange stories, to trade lures, etc. As we sat chatting, we noted how Versal had his limit, too, and was helping Deb & me with ours. Suddenly, my pole began to jerk and when I landed my fish, I had 2 trout — one on a cheese hook, one on a worm hook. Then the guys really laughed, "It takes us to bring you luck"; "You've been fishing all this time with the wrong party, in the wrong boat"; "The fish just follow us everywhere we go!"

The previous evening (We fished Fri. evening and Sat.) we'd been fly fishing and Cliff was having marvelous luck while ours was so-so. Cliff was whooping and bragging until Versal said he was going to cast a bobber right on top of Cliff's head if the didn't shut up. It was an eerie, beautiful time of evening when the eastern sky is still colored, but dusk is sifting over the lake, water like glass, frogs croaking. Our boats were anchored about 100 ft. off shore and 100 ft apart. The 4 guys — Cliff Doolittle, Earl Jeppson, Mike Jeppson, and Sid Groll — were in Cliff's boat; Versal, Deb and I in ours. Of course, Cliff yelled some wisecrack about what Versal could and couldnt hit. Versal made a beeline case and landed his bobber with a "whop" right in the middle of their boat. The bobber exploded. Versal nearly fell out of our boat laughing and he chuckled all evening.

But the best part of our fishing crowd is how full of fun they are, but it's always good, clean fun — no profanity, no dirty jokes and stories, no smoking or drinking at all, very gracious and respectful to any and all women, always insistent upon paying and doing their share, ready and eager to help anyone who needs help.[13]

Continuing Education

Seeking knowledge (in many forms) was a lifelong pursuit for Mom. She had obtained an associate's degree from Rick's College earlier in her life but always looked forward to the day when she could return and go further. And she did, this time at Utah State University, the same year I began there as a freshman. We had classes together.

Mom received her bachelor's degree then spent two years doing graduate work for her master's degree; however she didn't complete it for reasons explained on the next page.



Mom, on the day she graduated with her bachelor's degree at Utah State University, 7 June 1969.

Dad's "Work Worries"

Dad was a self-confessed worrier, especially when it came to financial matters. And since his strength and well-being was intricately connected to his ability to work (to support his family), as he grew older and health issues arose, he became increasingly anxious.

During the 1970s he began to experience back problems and arthritis crept up on him, causing him a great deal of pain and restlessness. His 10-hour days working on cement floors aggravated these issues.[14] He stewed about the "what ifs" as he realized his ability to work was diminishing, yet the cost of living was increasing. He also saw retirement on the horizon and worried about their meager reserves.

In the spring of 1972, Mom and Dad considered several options. They looked at rural homes on the west side of the valley — searched for a place where they could establish a repair shop and keep their Logan home to rent. Mom wrote: *"Versal has only 8 more years of work before he'll be retired, so we must begin to plan and prepare for that time. We want to have some rental units for income and to capitalize on Versal's fix-it-up abilities. We may try to set him up in a shop of his own after he retires where he can contract the refinishing of church benches as well as other repair work.*[15]

It didn't take them long to give up on the moving bit, though, after stiff resistance from Deb and Duane. And Mom explained another reason: *"Versal's having a bout with his arthritis this spring — not as bad as others he's had, but it's moved to his shoulder and arm. And when I realized how frustrated he would be facing all the work [moving and setting up a new place], I realized we might be biting off too much.*[16]

Adding to his apprehension was the changing nature of his work. He had been a "painter/welder" at Ace Mill for many years but demand for his skills was dwindling as Mom related in a letter to us, dated 28 Jan. 1974:

We're facing a dilemma caused by "progress." As more and more woods, furniture, etc. are being treated and surfaced by laminates [formica], Versal's painting work is dwindling. He's talked about this for many months, but this winter it has really hit — the mill has so much work that they're running long hours, but Versal hasn't had a bit of painting. And, as construction is at its usual cold-weather low, there's no welding. . . . right now he's doing some wood millwork, and admittedly learning a new and very intricate and complicated art. I do believe he's enjoying it, but he's worrying for, as the other millmen kid him, "You're the highest paid apprentice we've ever seen!" And his professional pride has always been that he'd give a good day's work for a good day's pay. I feel he's learning very fast — I've seen some of his work — he was justifiably proud as he showed it to me and explained about corners and mitering etc, etc. But this is a humbling, trying time for him and he's fasted and prayed as he searches for wisdom in just what to do. I know that spring always brings a big demand for his services, but I know, too, that he's looking beyond to other winters and slow times.[17]

Dad's work anxieties made him irritable. We kids knew how to read the signs and stayed out of the way but Mom dealt with all aspects of his fluctuating nature head on. And sometimes the house was thick with tension because of it.

During one especially difficult stretch of work worries in the fall of 1973, Mom and Dad had a big "falling out" over whether Mom should go to work to help supplement Dad's income or not. Mom abruptly announced she wasn't going to pursue a teaching job after she had just finished getting a degree at USU to prepare her to do just that. Dad had supported Mom's years of classwork at USU and now, when her job preparation was coming to fruition, he was devastated by her announcement. It put a serious dent in their prospects for financial security. They had a blow up!

It took weeks to resolve the contentious issue and oddly enough, letters! Yes, they used written communication to hammer out the problem when talking it out failed.

Some might think it odd that a couple sharing the same house would use letters to work out marital issues but not only did the written communications allow each to deliberately and clearly sort out their thoughts in a non-confrontational manner, it also produced documents that give us, their posterity, a rare look into their innermost souls. They are poignant love letters.

I've included Mom and Dad's powerful letters in the Appendix Section. I think they're a great example of how two devoted people can wrestle with a complex issue and came out stronger and closer as a result. They also illustrate the natural, sometimes painful ebb and flow in even the best marital relationships. Check them out at the back of the book.

The Traveling Love Letter

In the midst of the "I-won't-work" crisis, Mom traveled to Ridgecrest, California, to be with me when our daughter, Tiffany, was born. She mentioned but didn't go into detail about the disunity between her and Dad at that time, but I knew the disagreement had been significant. She seemed subdued with her feelings close to the surface throughout her visit.

While Mom and I shared the joyous event of Tiffany's birth, Dad was back in Logan missing her. So he wrote her an affectionate letter but it arrived after she had left; I forwarded it to LaVel's house in Bountiful, Utah, her next destination, but it missed her there, too. A few weeks later Mom wrote to us about the "traveling love letter":

Oh! Versal's letter! That wound out kinda funny. You kids forwarded it to Vel's OK. Only it was again too slow to catch me. So, using that letter as an excuse, Vel cycled here Sat. to personally deliver it. Versal says, "That's the limit when my kids have to trundle the first love letter I've written in years all over the country and deliver it right back home!" He'd given it to Deb to mail in the first place."[19]

When I ran across Dad's sentimental letter, I realized he had written it while he and Mom were still at odds about her decision not to work. He wrote it <u>after</u> her "Dear Dork" letter of 21 Aug. but well <u>before</u> his written response in October (see Appendix). It was reassuring to note that even though the "not working" issue remained unresolved, they still stayed close.



Thelma Hall Davis holding her newest grandchild, Tiffany Bird (15 days old), Ridgecrest, California, Sunday 30 Sept. 1973.

Looking on are myself (Twila Bird, Tiffany's mother) and my two older daughters, Trisha (4, left) and Raquelle (3, right). My husband, Richard Bird, took the photo.

Alaska 1974

Dad's ongoing Alaska trip-planning — he was constantly planning for his next excursion north — came to fruition once again in the fall of 1974. Mom was reluctant to go but agreed when they decided to include Deb and Duane in the venture. The trip's main focus was a 180-mile float down Alaska's Yukon River. The family excursion lasted from 12 July - 21 Aug. Dad wrote *"The trip was a great success and again I secretly vowed I would again return."*[20] And he did (ten years later in 1984).

All of his trips to America's northernmost state, including this one, are outlined in Chapter Eight: Alaska.

Deb's Surgeries

Shortly after the family returned from their Alaska river float, Dad and Mom faced a family crisis that caused endless worry for them from that time forth. Deb was diagnosed with "Hereditary Paraganglioma," a rare genetic disease characterized by multiple tumors, usually benign, in the neck and head. She required many technical, lengthy surgeries (several lasting over 20 hours) to remove them. During the course of these surgeries it was discovered she had yet another type of tumor, a pheochromocytoma, which could (and did) cause drastic hypertensive attacks. She almost died during one of the attacks when given anesthesia before a scheduled surgery in October 1975.



Deb and her beloved dog, Coalie, 21 Dec. 1975.
This photo was taken following a year of traumatic tumor surgeries with more to come. One of the surgeries caused facial paralysis on the right half of Deb's face.

Deb's tumors tended to recur and because she didn't tolerate surgeries well, she suffered through numerous painful recoveries the remainder of her life.

Mom and Dad were at her side through every hospital stay and tenderly cared for her during each lengthy recovery.

In 1982, when Deb was a newlywed and faced her 5th major surgery, Dad empathetically and lovingly recorded, *"I wish it were possible for me to assume Deb's physical impairment and thereby release her so she and Trev could carry on a useful life together. But I suppose we have to accept what comes."*[21]

Deb commemorated Dad's loving concern for her during her surgeries by writing the poem to the left, 18 June 1978.

Debra 18 June 197[illegible]

My Dad

Not very long ago,
And not very far away,
A memory rushes in,
Of a solemn, grey hospital day.

A memory of a father,
Who knelt close by the side of my bed,
And quietly took my hand,
Unashamed of the tears that he shed.

For long moments he knelt by my side,
And protected me from my pain;
His peace pushed my eyes to sleep,
I was with my Dad again.

Now moments have passed into years,
And the veil becomes oh, so thin,
I can see the face of my Dad,
Feel his heart - knowing love is within.

Our Davis Family Tumors

At this reunion, held on 21 Dec 1975, the Davis family gathered together in solidarity and prayer centered on Deb's well-being for she was scheduled for another tumor surgery — her fourth in a year — two weeks later.

Unbeknownst to us on this occasion was how deeply the tumor curse would eventually reach into the family. Deb was the first "tumor bloomer" but, at the time of this writing (2011), hereditary paraganglioma tumors requiring multiple surgeries for each person have been diagnosed and treated in four more Davis siblings (Brian, Lauris, Twila, and Duane) and two of the Davis grandchildren: Tawny Davis (Brian's daughter) and Jim Davis (Lauris' son).

From the time of Deb's first surgery in Dec. 1975 until Mom and Dad's deaths (Mom in 1985 and Dad in 1989), worrying through tumor surgeries became an unwelcome pattern in their lives. By the time Dad passed away, he had agonized through eighteen. Many more followed in subsequent years.

The genetic tumors (hereditary paragangliomas) were inherited through Dad's line from his mother, Charlotte Alice McDaniel. They have also been manifest in Dad's brother Floyd's family.

A SECTION EXPLAINING THE DAVIS FAMILY TUMORS IS INCLUDED IN THE APPENDIX.



All 35 of us!

C. LaVel Davis
John L. Clark
V. Brent Davis
Lauris H. Davis
James L. Davis
Twila Davis Bird
Richard E Bird
Trisha F.
Deb
Jim
Tam
Ingie
Dorothy M. Davis
Tiffany Bird
Raquelle Bird
Corette
Lyle
Lynette
Duane
Marci
Allan
Estelle
Shalyce
Jared
Tami
Jetawn Davis
Jennifer Davis
Laureen Davis

Versal and Thelma Davis and their posterity, 1975

Above: Mom and Dad's family totaled thirty-five at the time of this Christmas-time gathering at Mom and Dad's home in Logan. Only one family member was missing — John Lorin Clark Jr., who died as an infant six years earlier. Photo: Sunday, 21 Dec. 1975.

Right: Mom and Dad and their eight children on the same day as above.

(The name labeling was done by Mom, who wrote directly on the photographs.)

The Water Treatment

(Flashback Journal II, p. 170)

As the paint finisher at Ace Mill and Fixture, it was my responsibility to keep the paint equipment in serviceable order. Sometime in 1976 I had been experiencing some trouble with one of the pressurized paint pots and hoses. One of the connections, a paint fluid one, had been leaking a bit and I had made minor repairs while actually using the apparatus.

This particular morning I had filled the supply pot with catalytic varnish. This is a caustic mixture involving several strong acids. I was preparing to finish-paint several pieces of millwork which were set up in the finishing room. I clamped the airtight lid on the pressure pot and then pulled the trigger a time or two to test the spray pattern.

All was well except the troublesome leak near my hand, where the hose clamped to the spray gun. I worked the connection back and forth to effect a better seal. But not so; I was looking directly at the connection when it suddenly burst apart and the acid-treated varnish spurted upward with great force squarely into my face and especially both eyes! This was under twenty pounds of pressure.

I dropped the spurting hose, frantically placed my hands over my pain-ridden eyes, then dropped to my knees. For a moment I was at a complete loss as to what I should do. Then, with positive intent I crawled across the paint room to where I knew a hose was connected to a water line. In my complete blindness I managed to find this rubber garden-type hose. I quickly felt for the tap which I immediately opened. Then I felt water splashing near me. Finding the exit end of the hose was frustrating but then there it was. I forced my eyelids open with one hand as I washed from the hose with the other. This was cooling to my burning eyes and I continued to rinse the offending paint from them.

While still doing this I called for help, hoping that someone in other parts of the mill would hear me. While still rinsing and calling for help, I managed to alert Lauris who was working in an adjoining room. He rushed in, learned what had happened, and immediately helped me to my feet, then quickly led me to my truck. He gave me a wet towel to place over my eyes and then he drove nonstop to a good optometrist. I was admitted immediately and he inspected my eyes, applied a soothing ointment, gave me a pain-killing injection and then bandaged both eyes.

In a short while the pain became much less and then after removing the bandages, I was able to use my eyes although images were very distorted. I was given instructions as to future therapy, my eyes were rebandaged and then I was released.

However, before leaving the office, being led by Lauris, I inquired of the doctor regarding what should have been done as first aid treatment. His reply: "Mr. Davis, you did the very best thing possible."

Corette Moves In

LaVel moved his family to Richardson, Texas, in December 1976, when his new oil drilling business began picking up speed. His oldest child, Corette, stayed only until May then moved back to Logan following her high school graduation. She moved in with Mom, Dad, Deb, Duane, and, of course, Grandma Hall.

Corette and Deb shared a special relationship. They were niece and aunt, best friends, and closer than sisters in some ways. Having Corette as part of the Davis household was a happy situation. Mom wrote:

We are all enjoying having Corette live with us now; again there is lots of girls-talk, giggling, girls-talking-about-boys, makeuping, and more fun sharing housework and garden work. . . . I'm so grateful for the increased teenage activity around the house — it so beautifully counteracts Grandma Hall's chatter. And it's good for Duane to have the fun that comes from family association. He's already been on the whip-end of fewer-kids-and-older-parents.[21]

Corette not only shared the work load, she also helped take care of Grandma Hall, accompanied Mom and Dad on a trip to the northwest, tagged along on fishing excursions, accompanied them to BYU Education Week classes, attended Utah State University, accepted a calling in her singles ward, dated, and worked at several jobs to help support herself. She also generally brightened up the house. Mom noted an example in a letter dated 28 Oct. 1976:

Halloween — I'm so grateful for the uninhibited enthusiasm of youth. Deb & Corette have our front room gaily decorated. A black crepe paper spider web with a huge black spider hangs around the lights; a ghost grins from a

corner; 2 jack-o-lanterns are ready; orange and black crepe paper streamers festoon the doorways; a black cat arches above the front door. All these are homemade midst lots of laughing and girl talk. Duane and Versal both asked, "Are you getting ready for a party?" But it's all just for fun.[22]

The happy roommate association was short-lived for Deb began focusing on serving a mission. In May, just before Deb left, Mom wrote wistfully,

I hate to see this happy, happy association draw to a close as June will find Debra going on her mission to the Arcadia California Mission and Corette will be flying to Texas to help her parents as they move back to Utah. How lonely and quiet our house will be without our 2 lovely girls; I'm sure the loss will be much the same as when Twila and Tam left![23]



Corette Lynn Davis (18)

Deb's mission

Following several years of surgeries, on-again-off-again college classes, a series of different apartments and roommates, and an ultimately unhappy roller-coaster romance with Richard Sommers, Deb finally decided she needed to get away and focus on something; she chose to serve a mission.

She was called to the Arcadia California Mission and began her 18-month service in Pasadena, California in June 1977. Four of the five areas she served in were in the greater Los Angeles area; the fifth a few miles southeast of San Bernadino.



Debra Davis, eight days shy of her 21st birthday and two weeks before her departure for the Arcadia California Mission 22 May 1977.

Logan First Ward

The Logan First Ward was the spiritual home for our family from the time we moved to Logan in 1952 for over thirty years until we kids were grown and gone and Mom and Dad had each died.

We grew up attending all prescribed meetings, serving in various positions when asked, and participating in a myriad of spiritual, educational and social functions. Members of the First Ward were like extended family, with their familiar faces, welcoming smiles, friendly conversation, and well-prepared lessons. As we children grew to adulthood, ward members provided a ready-made safety net when we needed additional support and guidance outside of our own family. Someone was always there for us.

Mom and Dad both served tirelessly and faithfully in a variety of responsible positions in the First Ward over the years. Capping her service was Mom's call as Relief Society president from January 1974 until June 1976, when she was called to be Logan Stake Relief Society President.



Photo this page: **The Logan First Ward Chapel** at the corner of 1st South and 2nd West in Logan, Utah, Photo ca. 1960.

The Logan First Ward Chapel is one of the most beautiful chapels in the Church, in my opinion. Built in 1918 with classical Greek columns framing the entrance, the building has an imposing grace and ageless style found in few other chapels.

Below: **Pulpit and choir seats** at chapel front, 2003.

Dad sang in the ward choir, which occupied these seats for 35 years, often singing solos on special occasions. Featured behind the choir seats is a large oil painting centered on curved wood paneling. Painted by Logan artist Everett Thorpe, it depicts the faith and sacrifice of early Utah pioneers during the "miracle of the gulls" in May 1848 when large flocks of seagulls rescued the first crop of wheat the pioneers had planted in the Salt Lake Valley. The gulls gorged themselves on crickets, which were destroying the crops.

Bishop's Counselor

In July 1977, Dad was called as 1st counselor in the bishopric, serving alongside Terrel Smith as 2nd counselor — both under the direction of Bishop Wesley Norton, a longtime good friend. This administrative position was new for Dad and required many meetings but he grew to enjoy his service recording in his journal that they were "right and necessary."[24]

Every Sun. he leaves here at 6:45 a.m. for meetings — carrying his Scriptures and his bishopric-binder, Mom wrote to us a few days after Dad began serving. *He conducted for the first time last Sun. — fast and testimony meeting — and bore a beautiful testimony. Then, too, there were 3 confirmations (almost a record for the Logan 1st Ward in years) and 1 baby to be blessed. It was a wonderful new experience for Versal.*[25]

One of Dad's responsibilities was to help organize and conduct funeral services, which kept him busy. In the first six months alone he supervised thirteen funerals. And soberingly, he had the occasion to give assistance at the time of death for one ward member. Mom wrote about it in a letter to Deb, on her mission:

This is Versal's month to conduct Sacrament Meetings [as a counselor in the bishopric], but he's got all his programs arranged and will probably miss just one Sun. [a planned trip to Texas to help LaVel with his work there].

Yesterday Versal was conducting. Just as the last speaker was concluding, Cliff Jensen, an elderly member of our ward, got up and started toward the east (front) doors. However, he collapsed and died of a heart attack. Duane was sitting at the Sacrament Table as he'd helped administer the Sacrament. He saw Cliff fall and hurried back to help him, followed closely by Versal and the 70s Pres. Dave Holmes, who adminstered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The ambulance arrived within 5 minutes, but they never managed to revive Cliff.

The audience was very orderly, remaining seated or standing by their seats. Only Duane, Versal, and Dave and 3 of our nurses, Sis. Shupe, Sis. Wayman, and Margo Rigby, worked with Cliff. Versal soon came back to the pulpit, asked the audience to leave by the side doors, and dispensing with the closing song, had the benediction.

Bishop Norton sent Versal (who is Cliff's Home Teacher) and Don Rigby to follow the ambulance to the hospital. There, they administered to Cliff, but he never regained consciousness, dying within minutes. It was an answer to Cliff's prayers. With a long history of heart attacks, he'd told Versal and me just a few months ago that he hoped the Lord would release him at his next attack.[26]

Dad's bishopric position kept him hopping with three or four extra meetings each week — once he recorded eight in one day, numerous phone calls, and invitations to previously irrelevant (to him) social events.

But he was good-natured about it all. He penned, *"Mom and I have been very busy with various duties in respect to our positions in the church. It seems that I'm more busy now, as a supposedly semi-retired man, than I was when full time employed."*[27]


The Herald Journal, Sun. 31 July 1977

Bishopric of Logan LDS 1st Ward

HEADING THE Logan LDS 1st Ward are (from left), J. Wesley Norton, bishop; Versal Davis, 1st counselor, and Terrell South, 2nd counselor. The bishopric was reorganized recently. (Herald Journal photos)



Playing tug-of-war with a long strand of seaweed with granddaughter Marci Davis near Seattle, Washington, 1978.



Having a leg wrestle with granddaughter Heather Bird, Lakewood, Colorado, 1987.



Exhausted after a dunking bout with granddaughter Trisha Bird, Tony Grove Lake in the Cache National Forest, Utah, 1984.

Sense of Humor

Even though he ducked out occasionally when the jumble of noisy, rambunctious grandchildren got to him, his affection for and pride in his posterity was evident. He loved his grandchildren, and, as was his nature, he enjoyed teasing them. In fact, Dad's penchant for playfulness was almost universally named as one of his most memorable qualities by grandchildren old enough to remember him.

"He had a big smile with a hearty laugh and a sense of mischief," granddaughter Tiffany Bird Axtell remembers. *"That is probably how I will always picture him — a person who was fun-loving and ready for a little mischief."*[28]

Trisha Bird Leimer, another granddaughter, wrote of his playfulness:

I always felt a combination of excitement and fear when looking forward to our yearly visits to Utah. I could always expect Grandma, after hearing our car pull into their long driveway, to meet us on the front lawn with a big, warm, squishy hug — I loved those hugs! Grandpa would come later. He usually was busy somewhere, either out in the big, dark garage that smelled like grease, or at work. But when he did show up he would often make an exciting entrance. We were usually in the living roon and Grandpa would make scary noises from the next room, or come crawling in on all fours with his most vicious grin, growling, stomping and slapping the floor and sending us squealing to the tops of the couches. He loved to tickle us and tease us. We NEVER got away...he would always get us, no matter what we did. And we ALWAYS got tickled, no matter how much we protested. No mercy. But we survived and the whole thing usually ended up with Grandpa collapsing into his chair, chuckling and wiping tears of laughter from his eyes.

I always associated Raisin Bran and buttermilk with Grandpa. He would make a big deal out of drinking his glass of buttermilk in the morning from Grandma's tall, thin aluminum cups, drinking it so that he had a white moustache. Then he would look at Raquelle and me and mischievously ask us if we wanted some. (Buttermilk smelled so good, but we knew from experience it didn't taste like it smelled.) He would keep at us tenaciously during the usual adult table conversation, slyly winking at us, hugging the buttermilk carton, smacking his lips, then, when all else failed, offering us money. Finally, we would decide it was worth momentary torture to get his money.[29]

Estelle Davis Ritchie, a granddaughter with a little more caution regarding Dad's teasing, remembers a

time when he playfully guarded the doorway between the living room and kitchen, daring Davis cousins to pass through. *"He was challenging grandkids to try to get by him,"* she said. *"If they were caught, he threatened to spank them with his belt. Of course, lots of kids tried and I remember LOTS of laughing and screaming. I don't recall that I was brave enough to try to get through his gauntlet, but I do remember being somewhat terrified and definitely intimidated by him."*[30]

And then there was his legendary "spanking machine." Granddaughter Deone Davis Docken wrote: *I remember the birthday spanking machine, where everyone lined up in a row with their legs apart forming a tunnel and the birthday person had to crawl through all their legs, while getting spanked by those above. It didn't matter how old you were. I remember Debbie crawling through and she was at least 20. Grandpa would always be the last "spanker" and he'd catch you between his legs and give extra spankings.*[31]

When Dad was among the Maricopa Indians in Arizona, while he and Mom served their mission there, his sense of humor won him favor. He chased and teased the kids there just as he did his own back home. His zany antics delighted them; they gravitated to him.

My own memories? One stands out. When I was a sophomore in high school a cool senior asked me to the homecoming dance. I wasn't quite 16 yet so I had to get "special permission" from Dad. (He'd already nixed previous requests for dating occasions with other guys but I knew he had a fondness for this particular young man, so I was hopeful.) When I pleaded my cause, he said he'd give me the OK but only if I agreed to clip his grubby toenails freshly removed from a day in his smelly work boots. I reluctantly performed the gross task; he took my picture doing it; and, yes, he showed the photo to my date when he came to pick me up for the dance. He also told the poor guy he'd be waiting with his shotgun for my prompt return at the end of the evening. It's a good thing the fellow was acquainted with my Dad's brand of humor. He had a good laugh. We all did.





Granddaughters Trisha and Raquelle Bird gag on buttermilk after being bribed to drink it by their Grandpa Davis, 1977. Trisha said, *Grandpa loved watching our faces as we puckered and shuddered and gagged down the thick, bitter liquid. His laugh was so distinctive —this high-pitched, belly-bouncing, eye-wiping, rhythmic laugh.*[29]



Dad's "spanking machine" (he's just outside the photo) with Travis Bird getting his just dues at the Davis reunion in Colorado in 1986.



Me (Twila) clipping Dad's toenails as payment for early dating, fall 1963.



Dad typically hamming it up for the camera and Mom holding on for dear life, Logan, 1972.

Vol. I

Journal

Dad Begins Journaling

Dad began journal writing in room T-221 of BYU's old "Deseret Towers" (married student housing, now gone) on 5 Aug. 1977. On the front flyleaf he wrote:

Presented to me by my dear wife and companion at the conclusion of the last BYU Genealogy Seminar to be held on an all-church basis. It is a very fitting reminder of a very enjoyable and spiritual [week-long] experience on the beautiful campus of BYU. I hope and pray that the entries which follow in this volume will be worthy of the intent and dedication of my sweetheart in my life.[32]

Not only did Dad's journal writing commence at this point, but he also began his "Flashbacks," which he recorded in this and three other bound journals. Before his death in 1989 he filled nine volumes in all, four while serving his mission with Mom in Arizona in 1980-81.

Gearing Down

Dad was 62-years-old when he began journal writing in 1977, fast approaching retirement. He recognized his work as a full time welder/painter at Ace Mill would soon be gearing down but he was unsure how best to fill his time in future years.

He was enjoying his photography and genealogy, in fact, had caught on fire with a desire to document his own history, as well as his father's (John Gould Davis) and his grandfather's (Charles Augustus Davis). He was actively making plans to accomplish those goals.

To make their family research work more enjoyable as well as to establish some much needed space between themselves and Grandma Hall's incessant babbling, Dad remodeled a basement bedroom and created what Mom called "our genealogy nook." During the winter of 1976-77, he installed a plush carpet, designed and built a new chest of drawers, converted a closet into a well-lit study area, and purchased a comfortable platform rocker to place near the double bed in the room. This became their get-away, a favorite retreat for anyone in the family who wanted a calm, quiet, comfortable place to study.[33]

In February, 1978, Dad applied for Social Security benefits. It was a difficult step for him to take as he discussed in his journal:

I met with the local S.S. board last Wed. and set up my program of assistance from Social Sec. It was a humbling experience to realize that I have at last reached the age of at least semi-retirement. I will not receive a great deal of financial benefit but it should help in providing the basics of Thelma's and my needs. I am strongly considering assisting LaVel in his geology work [in Texas]. If I do so I will not commit myself to any definite hours at Ace Mill.[34]

LaVel, by this time had established his own business. He contracted with oil companies (mainly Sun Oil Co.) to check already established oil wells for potential uranium drilling. He worked mainly in Texas but traveled widely to nearby states.

At this point, in 1978, Vel's business was expanding: he purchased several probe trucks to test the wells; he bought an airplane to commute between his home in Utah and his drilling sites (he'd always wanted one and had long-since had his pilot's license); and he hired a work-crew. He and Colleen purchased a home in River Heights, near Logan, where she could be near extended family members while he was in Texas, which was most of the time. With his plane, it was an 8-hour commute (in good weather).

LaVel wanted to hire Dad; he knew he'd be great at keeping equipment running and assisting where needed. But working for LaVel involved some complicated decision-making on Dad's part. Mom described it in a letter to Deb on her mission:

Versal has a form of spring fever -- retirement fever, debating constantly with himself: to go to Texas and help Vel? to stay and work 30 hrs. per wk. at the shop (and thus forfeit part of his Soc. Security but keep up his retirement

benefits and health insurance)? to work 20 hrs. per wk., qualifying unpenalized for full Soc. Security, but losing out on health insurance and retirement benefits?[35]

Additionally, Dad worried about having to give up his bishopric position if he spent extended time in Texas and he was apprehensive about not being home to "keep an eye on Duane," who was forming a growing attachment to a very young Wellsville girl, Melanie Anderson.[36]

Dad's internal tug-of-war regarding where to work matched the external match between those who were vying for his skills. LaVel offered tantalizing enticements for him to come to Texas, while Ace Mill, about to begin construction on the new Logan Regional Hospital, begged him to weld "just this job." Ace was also in the process of moving into their new building on 10th West, where they needed him to install equipment, build new metal workbenches, and remodel old equipment to fit the new quarters.[37]

Dad flatly refused to begin Ace's hospital work but he helped with their move. But his heart wasn't in it and the prolonged welding on cement surfaces caused his arthritic knees to swell again — providing him a good reason to give Vel's work a try.

In April 1978 Dad and Mom made an extensive, 5,000 mile road trip to Texas (to look over Vel's situation), to Georgia (to visit John & Tami's family; to Arizona (to visit Dad's ailing brother, Warren; and back through Utah, stopping to visit a few other relatives and old friends along the way.[38]

Dad went back to Texas again to give Vel's work a try. He delivered Vel's newly pounded-out and painted little Toyota pickup; repaired Vel's probe rig; and spelled off a crew member doing probe work, while Vel reassigned him to map-out and locate the advance areas. Dad basically acted as Vel's trouble-shooter.[39]

Dad and his fellow Ace Mill Employees near the time of his semi-retirement, 1977.

Back row L-R: Paul Rogers, _____, Reidar Holman, John Hansen, Mildred Swensen, Don Despain, Russ Naylor, Earl Jeppson, Ev Harris (the boss), and Earl (Cliff) Doolittle.

Front row L-R: Trist Roberts, Wilford McAllister, Rod Wyberg, _____, _____, and Versal Davis.



Semi-Retirement

Mom's 4 May 1978 journal entry (written at 4:15 p.m.) happily exclaimed: *"The first day — really — of Versal's long anticipated semi-retirement! . . . He came home at 11:40 a.m., stepped inside the sliding-glass kitchen door and said, 'I'm through! I've promised to go back occasionally, probably every Mon. and Tues. to repair equipment and do some painting for them, but I'm retiring. I'm going to do some other things we've long wanted to do!'"*[41]

Dad launched his retirement on that spring afternoon by going down to his dark room and processing a bunch of genealogy pictures. Over the course of the next few days he hauled boys to the Ogden Temple to do baptism work, spent time bishopricing, and went fishing in the middle of the week (unheard of before!).[42]

Dad's transition out of full time work was a bit disorienting and unsettling at first. He wrote in his journal:

"At the first of this month I started my semi-retirement. This has been a disturbing thing to do. After a lifetime of scheduled labor it seemed strange to disregard the clock. But all has been well and I have been quite busy doing various things to earn some supplemental funds. I now try to work [at Ace Mill] about 2 to 3 days each week.[43]

A partial list of projects Dad poured himself into during the next year included:

- using his newly acquired paint compressor to paint Lauris' white pickup, the redwood fence, and Corette's VW.[44]

- attending BYU Education Week (on the USU campus) with Mom, Jackie, and neighbor Nellie Olsen. Mom exulted in a letter to Deb: *"He's even more intensely interested than I am: having worked out his schedule there first; refusing even to take a lunch break because he'd have to miss a class (the classes are scheduled solid from 12-9 p.m. this year); getting ready first, then helping me; talking so eagerly about the things he's learned. Imagine your Dad sitting for 9 hrs. straight! Unheard of before!"*[45]

- helping Duane fix up his wrecked car (an Opal he had only owned two days before someone plowed through a stop sign and totaled it). He even taught Duane to use the welder to do some cutting on the car body. Mom was pleased at their comradery but bemoaned, *"Our present problem is trying to keep our place from looking like a junkyard!"*[46]

- participating in a Logan First Ward roadshow — as an octopus! *"So, together we constructed a black, creepy costume,"* Mom wrote; *"Ingeniously, Versal put pieces of garden hose in the tentacles and he and two 8-year-old boys (all hidden under his black shroud) operated them. Irma Nelson made a paper mache head for him. Versal was the only adult in the roadshow (ours) and I've been amazed at his toleration of kid noise and antics."*[47]

- sprucing up the front room by retexturing the ceiling, paneling the north wall and adding a matching valance along the west and south walls, installing new lighting over the valances, and repainting throughout.[48]

Mom was generally thrilled with Dad's productivity and the ongoing home improvements. In the fall of 1979 she wrote:

This has been a good, special week. Fall has really arrived with frosty mornings, a little fog. Versal has capitalized on the warm, sunny middays to take out our front door, replace it with a double sliding-glass door which adds much cheerful morning light to our front room. He has completely glassed-in the front porch and it looks so nice, will add year-around use of the porch and add warmth to our home.

I am constantly thrilled by Versal's cleverness and efficiency as a craftsman as well as a repairman. No wonder Ace Mill, Ace Construction, and Cache Valley Builders still call him almost weekly to trouble-shoot for them. And some of the foremen — Dave Nielsen, Bert Craw, etc. often call Versal for help personally. Too, young Cliff Doolittle comes here again and again wanting Versal to work for him; often Versal does fix some things out in our shop for Cliff. Versal still goes out to Ace Mill a day or 2 a week, but not much more unless they're really in a tight spot. He's enjoying working on our home, our yard, and a day a week in the temple plus his bishopric duties. He loves home. And I do, too.[49]

Dad, too, received satisfaction from the home improvements he now had the time to make. He wrote in his journal on 30 March 1980:

I have been doing quite a bit on the house this winter and am nearly through with the exception of some spot painting on the outside. Our home is very modest but it is very clean and comfortable. Also, it is free of debt!!![50]

But having Dad home during the daytime caused some strains, too. Mom listed some of them in a letter to Deb, dated 26 Oct. 1978: *I'm finding that life really changes at retirement, no matter how well planned. Versal hasn't much patience with 3 things:*

1. My sitting at that table writing (letters are harder to get finished; R.S. org., planning, etc. is more spasmodic, often I just scoop my notes into my briefcase and hope for

another try at them; we really haven't settled into the book-work of genea. I do try to keep-up our current history!)

2. Being tied-down with Grandma. She's harder than babies because we can't bundle her up & take her. The real test with her is yet to come!

3. The endless phone calls [in conjunction with Mom's stake R.S. calling]. Versal is much more annoyed by them than my 2-3 times a wk. R.S. meetings or visiting.

But we're learning! He's always eager to do; his active life can't be turned off! We do go to Ogden to the temple [The Logan Temple was closed for extensive remodeling at this time.]*; he's surprisingly good and faithful with his 2-3 meetings per wk., his 8-12 hr. Sundays, his numerous interviews — altho he's often amazed at many of the most faithful members' wanting to "pick and choose" their jobs and assignments.*[51]

Off and on during the first few years of Dad's retirement he assisted LaVel as needed with is growing oil-well-logging business based mainly in Texas. Vel used Dad's skills to keep equipment running and fill in for others where needed. Dad wrote in the fall of 1978:

LaVel is going to bring his new probe truck ($62,000.00 worth) over and we will do a little adaptation work on it before he drives it back to Texas for use in the oil fields. He is very excited about his enterprise and I surely wish him well with it. I have helped him some by going to Texas and aiding him there. This has involved a great deal of flying by commercial jet as well as with LaVel in his own plane. I have been to Texas 3 times this year.[52]

Economy Woes

A deep recession engulfed the nation during the late 70s and early 80s: unemployment rose to 7.5%, inflation climbed to a startling 19%, the prime interest rate peaked at 21.5%, business bankruptcies soared, and exports declined.[53]

The economic sting was certainly felt by the Davis household. LaVel's oil-related business was especially hard hit. He and other family members struggled with job security and finances during this difficult time. Caution and belt-tightening were the order of the day.

Though relatively stable employment-wise, Dad and Mom took pointed measures to ensure their modest security during the country's poor financial climate.



Mom, stands on the front steps of our home not long after Dad enclosed the front porch during his semi-retirement, May 1979.

She wrote of Dad's ingenuity and skillfulness: *I look around our home and note with great pleasure how many things my clever husband has made, fixed, remodeled, redecorated, created.*

The following examples are representative of how they coped with the recession:

Gardening & Food Storage

They replaced lawn with garden

Mom's letter (29 April 1976): *The back lawn is a hive of garden activity: Versal and Duane are the spaders, Deb and I are the clod-shakers, and the lawn is disappearing. We're each assessed an hour a day — and I do believe we're enjoying it. . . The first one* [smaller garden] *was fine until Pres. Kimball said, urged, "Plant gardens! If necessary, dig up your unused play areas." So the lawn in our big back-yard is disappearing.*[55]



Michelle Davis, age 2. 1983

Michelle Davis Sheldon, Brian and Jackie's youngest child, recalled a tender moment regarding her Grandpa Davis and his new, big garden. She wrote:

I was only around 4 years old [probably in 1985 shortly after Thelma died], *and my family and I were visiting Grandpa Davis at his house in Logan. I remember there being a garden outside, and I snuck out to see what I could eat without anyone noticing. I sat down in the dirt and started to pick pea pods off the vine. I opened them, then popped the peas into my mouth. Life was good.*

I don't know how long I was out there, but at some point I heard something. I turned around, looked up, and there was Grandpa Davis standing mere inches from where I sat. He had caught me stealing food from his garden. I sat there petrified, immobilized with guilt and fear.

Before I could process my thoughts of what my next move would be, Grandpa Davis sat down next to me in the dirt, plucked a couple of pea pods off the vine, opened one up, and told me to stick out my hand. He slid all the peas out of the pod into my palm then did that with the remaining pea pods he had picked. We sat there for a while, each of us sitting in the dirt, picking pea pods, eating them together, and talking.

I have no idea how long we were out there in the evening sun but I remember that it was warm, my fingernails were green from all the pea pods, and that I loved my Grandpa so very much at that moment. That memory has always stayed imprinted on my heart: my grandpa and his granddaughter sitting in the dirt eating peas together.[56]

They planted a mini-orchard

Mom's journal (3 May 1979): *Today is our (Versal and my) set-aside genealogy day. However, this morning we went out to Greek Gardens and bot 1 prune tree, 2 plum trees, 1 bing cherry tree, 1 pie cherry tree, plus a flat of petunias. Then we came home, planted all of them plus 7 rows of spuds. This glorious spring weather!*[57]

They expanded their food storage

Mom's letter (17 Oct. 1976): *Raising a garden, picking and harvesting and cooking from a garden plus canning from a garden take a lot of time. And Versal has just bought a new rototiller and dug up more of the back yard in preparation for next year. . . I still have beets and carrots to bottle next week plus 30 trout Versal, Corette and I caught on Condie Reservoir yesterday. I've bought 9 cases of new bottles this year and I'll have them all full, too, along with my old ones.*[58]

. A few years later, I remember Mom proudly showing me her freshly painted and completely filled shelves of bottled meat and produce in the room at the bottom of the basement stairs. And Dad had added another food storage room nearby, which was filled with containers of wheat, rice, sugar and other staples plus emergency equipment. Their preparedness was thorough. When I asked Mom about the incredible abundance of their storage with so few left at home — I believe Duane was their only remaining chick — Mom replied, "We expect to help our married children and neighbors, if needed."

Gas Conservation

Mom sacrificed seeing Duane off at the MTC

Mom's letter (14 Feb 1980): *For economy in this wildly cost-escalating time, we'd decided to drive down* [to the MTC in Provo] *in the little orange Toyota pickup Versal bought from LaVel this week — it's so much less gas-guzzling than the Buick.* [But] *that little Toyota fits 2 people only! So, carefully equipped with tools and chains* [as precautions in the icy rain] *and Duane's 2 big, heavily laden suitcases, Versal and Duane drove away west* [without Mom], *red taillights twinkling in the darkness and rain.*[59]

They minimized family travel to Grandma's funeral

Mom's journal (23 Feb. 1980): *Versal and I, to keep costs down, had agreed to notify our 6 far-away children by letters* [regarding Grandma Hall's death] *which we mailed Friday. We really didn't want them driving home in uncertain winter weather; and with gas now at a minimum of $1.10 [an astronomical price in those days], we knew that few could afford the long drives. In fact, we 2 drove to Ogden [for her funeral] in our little Toyota pickup rather than the Buick to save on gas.*[60]

They embraced the Church's new "block schedule"

On 2 March 1980 the Church's new, consolidated meeting schedule was initiated. With all priesthood, Sunday School, sacrament, and former weekday auxiliary meetings held within a three-hour time block on Sunday. A First Presidency letter said the change was "to provide more time for giving attention to family life, individual study, self improvement, and Christian service." The change also helped support energy-saving efforts and helped members reduce costs of traveling to and from meetings.[61]

Mom, who was serving as Logan Stake Relief Society president at the time, commented on "this historical day of the change": *We've realized that this new streamlined program will not save a lot of time for the bishopric* [for Dad], *but will for the auxiliaries, and certainly for me: 7 Relief Societies to monitor instead of 17! A stake board of 12 instead of 16.*[62]

LaVel, Colleen and Shauna stand next to LaVel's plane, a Cessna, 1980.

LaVel's uranium logging business required frequent travel over scattered, long distances between oil wells (mainly in Texas) and family (in Logan and Texas). He tested old oil drilling holes for possible uranium deposits.

Flying his own plane enabled Vel to take care of his far-flung field work yet keep close to his immediate and extended family. He was able to cut the Texas-Utah commute from two days in a car to 8 hours in his Cessna Skylane (his first plane), and better still, to 5 hours in his second plane, a Piper Cherokee. The Piper, though fast, had engine problems, which caused Vel to make a desperate crash landing on a deserted air strip at the north end of the Great Salt Lake in February 1979.[63] After that he was leery of Pipers so he bought another Cessna (the one pictured here), instead.

The sinking economy sank Vel's business. His oil well logging contracts dried up and some customers — hurting financially themselves — couldn't pay for work he'd already done for them. Vel eventually had to give up his beloved plane and his company.



Dad and Coalie

Dad's ranching background instilled in him a great regard for trained, hard-working, domesticated animals. He had affection for and took excellent care of his work horses and cattle dogs. However, he had little tolerance for house pets, at least in his earlier years.

As children came along and insisted on having dogs and cats — pets which became part of indoor family life — he warmed up a tad. But he never displayed much affection for any of them until Coalie, a mixed-breed, odd-shaped, black "she-bitch" came along in the early 70s. For some reason that ugly dog wound herself around Dad's heartstrings. I observed in amazement as he cared for her, provided for her, tolerated her, and pampered her like no previous pet. Perhaps it was her ungainly appearance, which "only a mother (father) could love," that endeared her to him . . . and Deb, for she, too, was extraordinarily attached to that dog.



An incident in 1972, when Coalie came into heat for the first time, illustrated Dad's conflicted, evolving feelings about non-working dogs. Mom described the saga in one of her letters to us:

I'm so pleased with Versal's health this fall: he feels good, he looks fine, and his arthritis is in abeyance. . . . And he's absolutely glowing with his Sunday School class. [He taught the older teens in the ward.] *Attendance is increasing and participation excellent.*

I had to chuckle last Sunday: You see, we've had this problem — Coalie's been in heat, and tho we keep her inside, the male dogs sit outside and raise quite a ruckus. Last Sat. nite one of them parked on the front porch. Versal grunted a little and cussed mildly, but went back to sleep. But about 2:30 a.m. that dog got a big bone, brought it onto the porch, dropped it under our window, and began to gnaw. You can guess Versal's reactions: getting up rather hastily, he pulled on his pants, and, grabbing a broom, out he went. But he was defeated. The dog just lay down and let him beat it. Grabbing the dog's bone, Versal threw that as far as he could, and another dog made off with it. In desperation Versal drug the dog off the porch by the scruff of the neck, then tried to chase it off with the broom. It lay flat and let him beat. At least he was rid of the bone!

Versal came in feeling like a heel and with all inclination to sleep gone as definitely as the bone. So, he studied his Sunday School lesson 'til 6:30 when he finally returned to bed, happily. After Sunday School he laughed, "Guess I should thank that dog. I got some of the best reading and studying done from 2:30-6:30. The house was so quiet and I've never enjoyed study more!"

Speaking of Coalie, I guess we'll have pups in spite of all our precautions, and, needless to say, Deb and Duane are delighted. Anyone want a little, black pup?"[64]

Dad's treatment of the amorous male dog on the front porch was here-to-fore typical for him; what was new were his subsequent feelings of guilt and regret. Dad's rough edges were smoothing; his character was softening.

And Mom was right. Coalie became pregnant despite preventive measures. A few months later we received her update:

We have 7 little black and black-brown puppies in our basement. On Jan. 9, Dr. Duane and Nurse Deb personally saw to their delivery. I came home to an ecstatic Duane jumping up and down on the porch shouting, "Come and see! Come and see! Coalie's having her pups. She's already got one!" And she did, too, right on the front room couch. Deb and Duane rushed and got towels to "fix her up with." But Versal arrived about that time and escorted Coalie to a place he'd fixed in the basement. We let Deb and Duane supervise the births, and they finally announced 6. But next morning there were 7. They're at the darling stage now, yipping, growling, playfighting, and falling out of their box-home, unable to get back in."[65]

The third installment of the "Coalie has pups" saga is the one that truly illustrates how soft Dad was becoming. Again, another letter from Mom a few weeks later:

Our dog problems are solved — I hope. We were able to give away all 7 pups by running an ad in the paper and then keeping ugly Coalie out of sight when people came to see the

pups. Twice we made the mistake of letting Coalie appear — then people would say, "Uh, I believe I'll think about it a day or so." We shelled out the money to have Coalie spayed, licensed, and vaccinated — Versal says he must be weak in the head.[66]

Yup, Dad was getting weak in the head (and heart)! And I think his financial commitment to Coalie exemplified his emotional commitment. He simply loved that dog! And from that time forth, everywhere he went, she went, too. Deb may have been Coalie's primary caregiver most of the time but Dad was right there making sure her every need was met, too. When Deb moved out (and back in) multiple times over the dog's lifetime, Dad remained Coalie's constant buddy. And when the day finally — ultimately — arrived for her to leave this earth life, it was Dad whose pain was the greatest.

Mom recorded his misery in her journal:

Debra, looking very lovely in an ecru skirt, blue blouse, and airy feminine sandals, arrived for a visit from Provo. . . She came for a sad, sad weekend — Coalie was dying and Deb sat up with her all night, then went with Versal as they took Coalie to the vet. When a forlorn Deb drove out of here on Tues. 27 Feb., I felt so sorry for her: her beloved little black dog was desperately ill; her romance with Richard [Sommers] *was at a dead end; she looked so alone as she drove toward Provo again.*

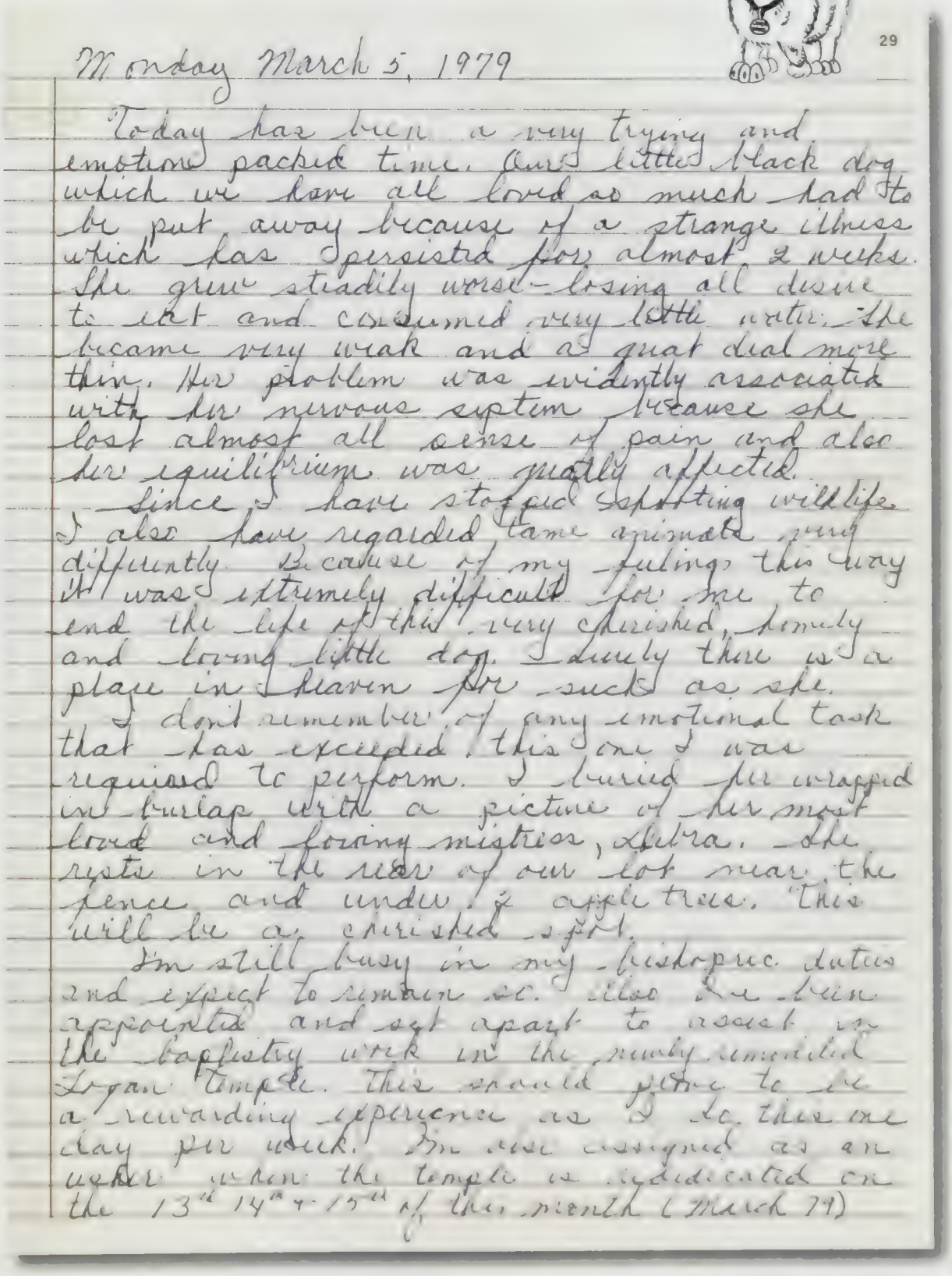
Versal finally knew he'd have to kill Coalie. She was starving to death. She couldn't eat at all. Versal and Duane had tried to tempt her with all her old favorites: her crunchies, meat, ice cream, candy. Then they tried milk, moist dog food, tidbits from the table. At the last, Coalie could not retain water — she'd drink, then vomit.

So, on 5 March, Versal asked me to leave. I went uptown and wandered around Bernina until 1 p.m. When I came home, Coalie was gone and Versal was sitting quietly in his rocker. Under the apple trees there was a little grave. Later, Versal told me that when he shot Coalie, she never even quivered; she died instantly and he was so grateful! He carefully wrapped her and buried her very deeply, here where she was so loved and happy. Several times I noticed tears in Versal's eyes and quiver in his voice when he talked of Coalie.[67]

Dad's sentimental journal entry regarding Coalie's death is shown below.



Deb's 1974 drawing of Coalie[4]



29

Monday March 5, 1979

Today has been a very trying and emotion packed time. Our little black dog which we have all loved so much had to be put away because of a strange illness which has persisted for almost 2 weeks. She grew steadily worse — losing all desire to eat and consumed very little water. She became very weak and a great deal more thin. Her problem was evidently associated with her nervous system because she lost almost all sense of pain and also her equilibrium was greatly affected.

Since I have stopped spotting wildlife I also have regarded tame animals very differently. Because of my feelings this way it was extremely difficult for me to end the life of this very cherished, lovely and loving little dog. I truly think there is a place in Heaven for such as she.

I don't remember of any emotional task that has exceeded this one I was required to perform. I buried her wrapped in burlap with a picture of her most loved and loving mistress, Debra. She rests in the rear of our lot near the fence and under a apple tree. This will be a cherished spot.

I'm still busy in my Visiting duties and expect to remain so. Also I've been appointed and set apart to assist in the baptistry work in the newly remodeled Logan Temple. This should prove to be a rewarding experience as I do this one day per week. I'm also assigned as an usher when the temple is rededicated on the 13th 14th & 15th of this month (March 79)

1979 Canada Trip

Versal is getting cabin fever and . . . has our maps out planning 3 weeks in the back country of British Columbia," Mom recorded in her journal in mid-February 1979. *"We were both enchanted by that mountainous, heavily forested, still-in-the-frontier-stage country when we traversed its length in 1974. We want to drive to isolated Bella Cula on the Pacific Coast."*

Right up to the day they embarked on their northward journey, Mom and Dad weighed negative factors regarding the wisdom of the long road trip — the US gas shortage, worry about Duane who "needed parental guidance," their church responsibilities, and care for Grandma Hall — but *"after much thought, commitment, and prior arrangement,"* Dad wrote, *" we decided that this trip is justified. It may be about the last major outdoor experience that Mom & I may ever have. The gas shortage is not acute in Canada, Deb and Duane have promised to carry on at home — grandma, lawns, irrigating, etc. Our church duties have very conveniently arranged themselves to our benefit at this special time."*

So, off they went, with all necessary equipment packed into their bed-equipped van. Before crossing into Canada, however, they spent a few days visiting three sons and their families, all then living in Washington: Lauris & Dorothy in Mt. Vernon, where Lauris was employed at a cheese plant; Brian & Jackie in Federal Way (Seattle), where Brian had begun a decades-long job at Boeing; and Brent & Inge in Vancouver, Washington, where Brent worked for the IRS.

While spending a few days at Lauris & Dorothy's home, Mom and Dad were treated to a crabbing expedition on the Puget Sound by Lynn Neeley, Lauris' cheese plant supervisor (and friend), who owned a large cabin-cruiser.

Mom described this fascinating, new experience: *For crabbing we used 2 round, collapsible nets, one for each side of the boat. 2 or 3 herring were wired to the bottom of the net in a little chicken-wire basket. Making sure we were in 20 ft. of water . . . the men threw the crab nets overboard. While waiting the required 8-10 minutes, Lauris, Lynn and Versal fished for dog shark, hoping to use them for crabbait, too. No luck on them, however. But the crabbing got exciting. The nets are pulled up very quickly to keep the crabs from crawling out when they feel it begin to move. And if there are several crabs in it, it makes the men grunt a bit to hoist it. Then the fun starts: all females are thrown back as are all the little ones. The crabs shell must measure 6" from side to side to be a "keeper." Of course, the fun is in getting the crabs out of the net, sorting them, and getting the keepers into a bucket filled with ocean water — without the crabs getting you. Often in their wild gyrations they'll*





"Family Day" at a beach about five miles from Brian & Jackie's home, Saturday, 28 July, 1979.

All three of the Washington Davis families convened at the beach for a picnic and fun: the Brent Davises, the Brian Davises, and the Lauris Davises. Mom wrote: *"What a fun day! There are all between the ages of 3 and 12 plus 8 husky visiting adults. 17 of us! The kids climbed the mountain and [illegible] and dug clams with a zest. As the tide came in, we'd have to keep retreating. Everyone dug clams except Versal and I (we tagged along and looked at the operations — Brent, Brian and Lauris were chief diggers) and Dorth and Jackie stayed to guard the still-heavily laden picnic tables. The aftermath of the clam digging: we couldn't get the sand out of the clams so we could eat them. Brian kept changing the water on the captive clams until they looked OK to us. He let them remain alive in the water 24 hours, then he cooked some — yuck! Gritty! Brian says the only other thing he knows [illegible]."*



Dad, Deb, their new dog, "Squeaky," and Deb's secret — the picture she'd been feverishly painting for Mom and Dad as a surprise gift while they were on their Canada trip, Aug. 1979.

Mom explained: *We arrived home about 5 P.M on Thursday. Deb came rushing out with a gleam in her eye, a puzzling, big grin, and an excited "Oh! You're not supposed to be home yet — not til Sunday!" In her hand was a blue and white, paint-smeared, cake tin — her palette. We were surprised, pleased, really touched by her talent and love!"*

pinch each others' legs right off.

Dorth, Marci, Jim & I were the cheering section. Versal and Lauris grabbed and often missed. They soon learned which end was the stay-away-zone. Versal miscalculated once and, tho he didn't bleed, he hurt. He was amazed! The females have a much broader belly-patch than the males, so all bellies were examined midst wildly waving legs (6 or 8 of them) and pincers (2). Often the littler crabs flopped thru the net, but more often the crabs hung fiercely to the nets. Only one net is pulled up at a time because of the activity. We caught many, many crabs, with about 18 keepers.

Lynn showed us an "easy" way to clean a crab. One person holds all legs and pincers by grabbing from above and behind. The 2nd person yanks the shell off. The first person now bends the legs up & back, breaking the crab into 2 sections right up the middle. The 2 pieces of crab are then held out over the ocean as far as possible and shaken hard so the insides fly out into the water. Thus they are cleaned! These 2 leggy pieces are dropped into salt water, boiled 20 minutes and ready to eat. Delicious with butter or sauces. We just had butter. Lynn cooked one on his little gas stove in the boat to show us how and let us try it. . . . After we got back to Lauris and Dorth's ample little apt., we cooked and enjoyed crab."

On Monday, 30 July, Mom and Dad bid farewell to family and headed north on the Cascade Highway through rugged mountains and heavily forested country. Exuberantly, Dad exclaimed, *"This is my kind of country!"*[3]

They crossed into Canada on Aug. 1, traveled as far north as Bella Cula, then headed homeward crossing the border back into the U.S. a little over a week later on Aug. 9.

Upon reaching St. Anthony, they learned of the death of Dad's niece, Alice Shosted Singleton, whose funeral was two days hence. So, of course, they stayed to pay their respects and visit with extended family and friends before completing the last leg of their trip home.

Baptizing the Van

(Flashback)

I wish the wind would let up for a bit so I can steer this boat onto the trailer," LaVel said as he frantically tried several times to maneuver the pitching craft between the upright guides of the semi-submerged trailer.

Try and remain near the back of the trailer and I'll come back and try to help," I said as I set the emergency brake and thoughtlessly shifted into neutral.

These remarks premised what turned out to be a frustrating and bewildering chain of events.

To give this story factual background I relate this tale:

(A Journal Entry)
Saturday, November 10, 1979

The fishing in Condie Reservoir for several weeks previous had not been very good but LaVel was home from Texas for a few days and we decided that a November try would be in order. So here we were, about four o'clock in the afternoon, in the aluminum boat. Eight-year-old Lyle was with us and after a very successful hour or so of fishing, we had acquired our limits. It was getting dusk and a brisk wind had come in from the south. We pulled the anchors and cranked up the five-horse power motor and started back toward the loading ramp where the van and trailer were parked.

Upon arriving, Lyle and I jumped onto the bank and LaVel remained in the boat to guide it upon the trailer. Lyle and I got in the van and I deftly backed the trailer into the water with the van resting in about six inches of water.

I waited for LaVel to give me the proper signal to pull the loaded boat from the reservoir. But no signal came! Instead, I could hear him commenting on how difficult it was to control the boat in the rough water caused by the cold wind. It was then that I volunteered to assist.

After emerging from the van, I climbed onto the tongue of the trailer without even getting my shoes wet. LaVel was on one side of the trailer hanging to the front end of the boat; I was on the other side in the same posture.

By hanging to the boat we found that we could pull the craft into place. After two or three pulls like this we discovered we were standing in water — previously we had been above water level — and upon looking at the van we noticed it was slowly rolling backwards down the incline into deeper and deeper water.

LaVel immediately jumped into the waist-deep, cold water and sloshed to the van's side and rescued Lyle. I jumped also and frantically made my way to the driver's door and opened it. I splashed into the wet seat and immediately set the brakes and put the shift in park position. The motor was still running though three-fourths submerged. But, the rear section of the van was actually semi-floating and no response was felt when I tried to pull forward.

After several attempts, it became apparent that the situation was hopeless and so I stopped the gurgling motor and again entered the waist-deep, cold water and waded to shore to join LaVel and Lyle. The wind had blown the boat near the bank and LaVel secured it there.

Well, what were we to do? We were wet and chilled, two miles from the highway, and no one else was around to assist.

We decided that LaVel should head for the main road, hitch a ride and get Lynn Olsen's 4-wheel drive outfit. Then he would return with it and attempt to pull the van from its watery parking spot.

LaVel left and I took Lyle to the north side of the roadway leading into the reservoir. Here we were semi-protected from the chilling blast of the wind. I decided a fire would be needed and so, hesitatingly, I waded out to the van to acquire some matches which I knew were inside. But sadly I soon realized these were wet and under water! In my desperation, however, I remembered that the small Coleman stove, which was barely above water, had a small pack of book matches. These I frantically found and put in my upper shirt pocket. Then another wade to the shore where I picked up the gas can which, fortunately, still had gas inside. I rushed back to Lyle, pulled some grass, gathered some small sticks and doused the fire ingredients with gasoline. Soon a warm fire was blazing and I then gathered additional fuel to keep it going.

"Grandpa, do you think this will get in the papers?" Lyle asked as we tried to be comfortable.

I chuckled a bit about this as I stirred up the fire. I cautioned Lyle to stay down low and stay in the warm perimeter of the fire. I told him that it would be two or three hours before his dad would be coming back.

But a "Hey there" from up the road let us know that

LaVel was back with us. He had gone to the highway, had been refused passage by several cars and had walked along the highway until he came to a farmhouse where a light in the window had indicated someone was home. An old man was living there alone but he had a telephone, which he allowed LaVel to use. LaVel contacted Colleen who, in turn, got her dad.

Both Colleen and her dad came in separate outfits. Neither knew the way to the reservoir, so Colleen got help from the Franklin County sheriffs department. An officer was very gracious and assisted both of them in leading the way to us. By about 10 p.m. we had finally rescued the trusty van from Condie Reservoir. But it was irreparable and so we towed it to a spot near the highway and then left for Logan.

The next morning Duane and I took the Buick and, after again trying to start the van, attached a tow chain and pulled the wet, soggy mass to Logan.

Incidentally, I had to completely strip the inside: sleeping bags, blankets, food, cooking equipment, etc. These were hung out to dry. Both gas tanks were filled with gas and water. The transmission, engine, crankcase, and differential had to be drained. The starter had to be rebuilt and wiring had to be dried.

I jokingly telephoned Mom, who was in Seattle, and told her that I would have to baptize the old van again because I never quite got it all the way under this time. I was able to restore the van, however, and in fact, I drove it to Washington and then back before the transmission started developing problems at home.



Lauris and Dad's van a few months before its "baptism," Aug. 1979. The van, affectionately dubbed "Magnificent Max," was equipped with a small sink and cabinet, and a fold-out bed — perfect for travel.



A Davis family five-generation photo, Dec. 1979.

Ruby Birch Hall (87), great, great grandmother; Thelma Hall Davis (63), great grandmother; Clinton LaVel Davis (41), grandfather; Corette Davis Spence (21), mother (at right); Trevor J. Spence (born 17 Nov. 1979); Lynette Davis Ballard (20), mother (at left); and Casey LaVel Ballard (born 17 May 1979).

Little Trevor and Casey were the only two great, great grandchildren Ruby Hall lived to see. She died on 19 Feb. 1980, a little over a month after this photograph was taken.

Great Grandpa!

With the births of Casey LaVel Ballard on May 17, 1979, and Trevor Jay Spence six months later on Nov. 17, Dad entered the honored realm of great-grandparenthood. Casey is the son of Gordon (Gordy) C Ballard and Lynnette Davis, LaVel and Colleen's second daughter. Trevor's parents are Gary Dean Spence and Corette Lynn Davis, LaVel and Colleen's oldest daughter.

Temple Service

During the 1960s the Church began making plans to modernize the 92-year-old Logan Temple. Repairs in plumbing, heating, electrical work, and equipment were needed. Additionally, the Church wanted to replace the temple's progressive-style, live-actor endowment dramatizations with motion picture ordinance rooms. Plans became so extensive they required the complete gutting of the temple's interior, leaving only the building's outer stone walls intact. From October 1976 to December 1978, new construction created a whole new building within its old walls. Unfortunately, the temple's exquisite pioneer craftsmanship was sacrificed.[75]

The "new"Logan Temple was rededicated by President Spencer W. Kimball in sessions on 13-15 March 1979. Mom, Duane, and Melanie Anderson (Duane's girlfriend, later his wife) attended the 4:30 dedicatory session on 14 March, in the "Priesthood Room" on the second day of services. Dad, who was serving as an usher in another part of the building, was unable to sit with them. (He attended an earlier session.) President Marion G. Romney conducted and was the first speaker. He was followed by O. Leslie Stone, L. Tom Perry, and President Spencer W. Kimball. At the conclusion of the talks President Kimball read the dedicatory prayer. Pres. Romney explained the "Hallelujah Shout," then led it. The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" and "Bless This House."[76]

A month earlier, on an evening when Mom and Dad had just returned from a stressful trip to Arizona, Dad received a phone call asking him to meet with the new temple president. It caught him at a tender time; Dad began to worry. Mom recapped the sequence of events in her journal on Thursday, 1 Feb. 1979:

We'd camped in the van at a rest stop right in the mountains between St. George and Cedar City on Mon. night. However, the weather turned so bitter cold that Versal was afraid the van wouldn't start (25 degrees below zero); so twice in the night he got up to start the motor and warm it up. . . . At 5 a.m. I started driving, supposing that to be better

than worrying, so we arrived home much earlier than expected.

(The house was a mess — dishes stacked in the sink, garbage containers overflowing litter. But Grandma was OK, thank goodness.)

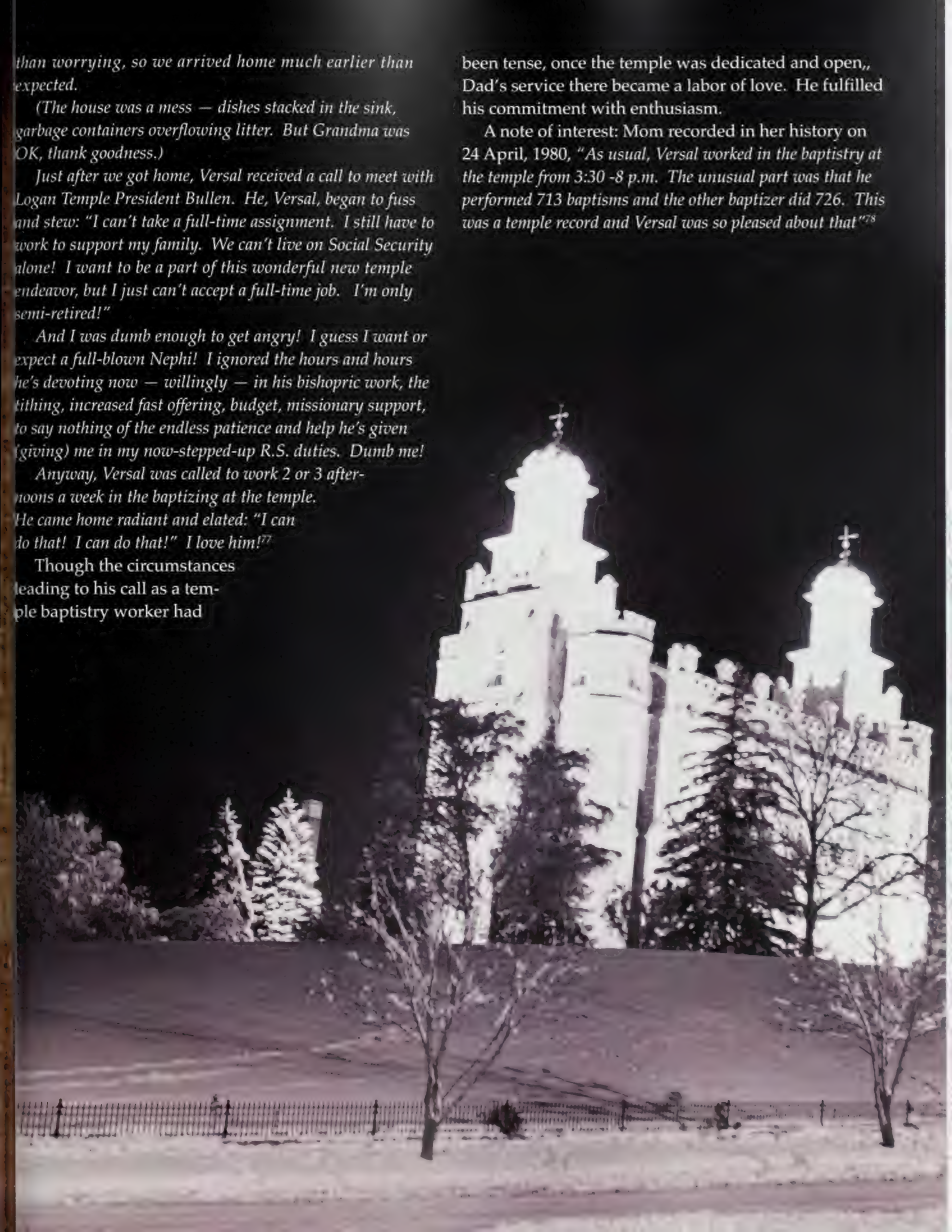
Just after we got home, Versal received a call to meet with Logan Temple President Bullen. He, Versal, began to fuss and stew: "I can't take a full-time assignment. I still have to work to support my family. We can't live on Social Security alone! I want to be a part of this wonderful new temple endeavor, but I just can't accept a full-time job. I'm only semi-retired!"

And I was dumb enough to get angry! I guess I want or expect a full-blown Nephi! I ignored the hours and hours he's devoting now — willingly — in his bishopric work, the tithing, increased fast offering, budget, missionary support, to say nothing of the endless patience and help he's given (giving) me in my now-stepped-up R.S. duties. Dumb me!

Anyway, Versal was called to work 2 or 3 afternoons a week in the baptizing at the temple. He came home radiant and elated: "I can do that! I can do that!" I love him![77]

Though the circumstances leading to his call as a temple baptistry worker had been tense, once the temple was dedicated and open,, Dad's service there became a labor of love. He fulfilled his commitment with enthusiasm.

A note of interest: Mom recorded in her history on 24 April, 1980, *"As usual, Versal worked in the baptistry at the temple from 3:30 -8 p.m. The unusual part was that he performed 713 baptisms and the other baptizer did 726. This was a temple record and Versal was so pleased about that"*[78]



Grandma Hall

Grandma Ruby Birch Hall, Mom's 81-year-old mother, who had been living in Harrisville (Ogden), Utah, moved in with Mom and Dad in Logan on Thanksgiving Day, 1973. Before bringing her to live with them, Dad, Mom, Deb, and Duane — those still living at home — counseled together and agreed that if at any time the pressure became too great on any one of them, that person had the right to vote against retaining Grandma Hall in their home.[79]

Physically, Grandma was doing well but mentally, she had been declining steadily. When she arrived, Grandma's memory was spasmodic and failing: she sometimes didn't recognize immediate family members; she was always looking for "lost" items; she couldn't remember the immediate past and time was meaningless to her. But she was happy, gentle, helpful (with simple tasks), and she seemed content in the Davis home. She chuckled at Deb and Duane's animated chatter and Coalie's antics.[80]

But as her mind deteriorated further, Grandma's sweetness evaporated and her care became more consuming. She required assistance bathing, dressing, bathrooming, and eating. She would sometimes leave the house — "going home" — but couldn't say where she lived or who she lived with. Once she slipped out in the pre-dawn darkness, at 4 o'clock in the morning, barefooted, with an apron wrapped around her cold-sensitive neck. By the time Mom and Dad got her back in the house and into a hot tub, she was "so glad to be home again."[81]



Four generations: Ruby Birch Hall, Thelma Hall Davis, Dorothy Minkler Davis (wife of Versal and Thelma's son, Lauris), and baby Marci Aileen Davis, born 25 July 1974.

Soon she had to be confined to her own room much of the time as she was becoming "a menace to herself: looking for knives to "cut up a chicken"; putting rags on the stove and turning it on to "put on her sore neck," etc." She required help with every aspect of her waking activities. And she began talking constantly to imaginary companions from morning until long after she went to bed.[81]

Eventually her babble became uncharacteristically profane — totally opposite from the soft-spoken language she had used her entire life. This was one of the most difficult aspects of Grandma's care for Dad. In February 1978 he wrote in his journal:

Thelma's mother has been and is a nerve shattering experience for me. She is very feeble-minded now and at times is very loud and fowl with what she says. This sometimes goes on for several hours and is extremely irritating to me. I have to go somewhere where I cannot hear the constant babble she emits. However, she is still welcome in our home and I respect Thelma a great deal for her untiring efforts in looking after her mother.[82]

Dad wasn't actively involved in Grandma's care but he was supportive of her continued presence at home. Feelings he expressed in his journal on 19 Sept. 1978 indicate he hoped his benign assistance helped atone for slights to his own mother in her old age decades earlier:

Thelma's mother is still with us and is quite a chore for Thelma. She is very senile and is much worse than a young baby to care for. However, Thelma looks after her basic needs and I'm sure she will be blessed for so doing. I recall my own mother's condition prior to her death. I feel I, perhaps, was somewhat neglectful in showing her the care and love that was needed. I hope my permission to have Thelma's mother in our home will help make up for what I did not do for my Mom.[83] [See p. 148 for information regarding Alice Davis' last years.)

Ruby Birch Hall passed away after a brief bout with the flu on 19 Feb. 1980, after six years of care in the Davis home.

A Tribute to Thelma's Parents

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 141)

Now, in 1984, I look back very closely at how some people's lives have affected others. At this time, I recall Thelma's parents and how their lifestyle helped mold the lives of their children and, to some extent, the lives of their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law.

Thelma is the oldest living child and she is the one whom I can judge the best. She exemplifies very much what she was taught as a child within the home. Her life has been very commendable and I'm certain her parents are to be given much of the credit.

I'll not give a detailed history of her folks because she has written much about this in her history collection. But, I would like to tell of a few things relevant to my appreciation of them.

I first became acquainted with them when I dated Thelma in 1934. This was a casual meeting, but I was shown real courtesy and respect. As time went by they learned that I was from that "Davis family," which had experienced considerable intrigue because of the marriage problems of two of my older sisters. This was a matter of concern for them, feeling that I may exhibit similar characteristics. But, as time rolled on, I was accepted more and more.



Jick and Ruby Hall at their Harrisville (Ogden), Utah, home located at 493 North Harrisville Road, ca. late 50s. Jick died at age 76 in 1958.

Jick was a very energetic individual and could not remain idle for extended periods. I reflect back and remember how I was faced with some project or other to be completed before my taking his daughter out. I grew used to this and even enjoyed working with him for a short time on these occasions.

Ruby, Thelma's mother, was always nice to me though she was very shy. She was a very good cook and she soon learned that I enjoyed her chicken and noodles. This became a very welcome treat for me even many years after Thelma and I were married.

When Thelma and I were on the ranch, Jick assisted me in remodeling the ranch home. He was a proficient carpenter and proved this to me many times. He attempted farming several times but only mild success came his way. Yet, even though handicapped with one bad hand and arm, he managed to provide for his admirable family.

Thelma's parents lived their religious principles. At no time have I been able to be critical in this respect. These same attitudes were implanted in their children and I'm sure they are both reaping great celestial glory for all this effort.

I state very positively here that I always felt very welcome in Jick and Ruby's homes, wherever they were. And if I needed help, they tried to assist.

In Harrisville, near Ogden, Jick quietly and suddenly passed away, while reclining in a simple rocking chair in the home. He was reading the evening newspaper and when he failed to answer Ruby's casual remarks, she investigated and learned he was dead. His feet were

crossed on an ottoman and the newspaper was still clasped in his hands. His struggle during life had been hard but his passing was exceptionally easy.

Thelma's mother lived alone for a short time but her mental processes became less and less stable. In a decision made by the family it was felt that she should be with some member of the family. She was finally assigned to live with us. She remained for over six years and then quietly joined her husband.

They both left a legacy of great love and respect. Their children and grandchildren are building upon this foundation as they try to emulate the examples set for them by two very creditable people.

Sometime soon Thelma and I will have the joy of again associating with these loved and loving people.

Family Challenges

Today is my 64th birthday and I was greeted by several calls from the various members of the family. It was pleasing to know the kids remember and care. I am feeling well and am still able to work at the mill a good share of the time. However, a great cloud of concern has spread over our family. . .[84]

Following this introduction Dad commenced outlining a serious family matter, only one among many which beset his large, fully involved family. Serious family issues ebbed and flowed as surely as the tides of the sea. At any given time he and Mom were never completely free of worry over someone in our family. Our challenges covered a whole spectrum of concerns: care for elderly Grandma Hall; Vel's rapidly expanding business then grinding collapse during the energy crisis; job instability for other family members; Duane's intense romance with very young Melanie Anderson; son-in-law Richard Bird's deteriorating health with multiple sclerosis; serious emotional and mental health issues borne by Brian and Jackie; the inevitable, escalating loss of older family members and dear friends; and, of course, their own increasing and sobering health issues. Nothing worried them more, however, than faltering testimonies and spiritual crises experienced by several during intense trials of faith.

Dad wrote, *"It seems we are constantly confronted with a family crisis of some kind or another. But even so, we are grateful for and to every one of them."*[85]

After a lengthy description of yet another critical situation a few weeks after his 64th birthday, Dad concluded:

I hope that whoever reads this in the future will realize that life is a complex mixture of experiences both good and bad. The good ones we welcome and enjoy; the bad ones we abhor and wonder why! But all problems are meant to be overcome. By doing this we are exposed to a refining fire and how we emerge is the important factor. The reward for diligence, patience, love, and long suffering may not be entirely realized in this mortal existence, but, whether now or later, it is assured.[86]

Dad's love for us collectively and individually was intense and constant as he expressed a few years earlier, when he and Mom reminisced at the time of their 40th high school class reunion. Mom recorded Dad's feelings:

The class reunion was intensely interesting to us, meeting school chums of 40 years ago. As we had guessed, we have by far the largest family; 2 others have 7 children but considerably fewer grandchildren. In our day the most fashionable people had 2 children, preferably a boy and a girl. The middle class had 4 children, and the ignorant had more. As we were driving to St. A., speculating as to families, Versal said very earnestly, "The older I get, the more grateful I am for the family we have; it makes all my work and life worthwhile."[87]

Duane's Mission

Duane, the tail end of the Davis bunch, kept Mom and Dad's parenting skills in focus well into their grandparenting years. Though good-natured and easy to love, he nonetheless gave them a run for their money when, at age 15, he fell in love with Melanie Anderson, who was only 12! For the next four years Mom and Dad planned their lives around the need to "run herd on Duane." Time and again in their letters and journals they expressed concern over the young couple's too intense, too soon romance. Year after year of tense supervision, almost constant worry, and inevitable clashes with Duane were wearing on all concerned.

However, as the two teens matured and Duane graduated from high school, he made a startling-but-welcome announcement on 3 May 1979. Mom recorded:



Duane McDaniel Davis (almost 19) and Melanie Anderson (15), a month before he left to serve in the New England States Mission, Dec. 1979.

Duane, who had been at work from 3-7 p.m. at Valley Discount, came roaring in on his Trials cycle, and, while assembling mitt, ball, etc. for his next round of activity — the baseball games at Mendon, said: "I need to talk to you and Dad about something I've been doing a lot of thinking and praying about — about something Melanie wants, too — me to go on a mission! I've decided I want to go. However, Melanie wants us to be able to date more than once a week until I go [a reference to a dating stipulation which had been imposed on the couple).[88]

Mom and Dad were thrilled but cautious, as Mom expressed, *"Well do we realize that there are many pitfalls and much working and praying to be done. But our beloved Duane has joyously surmounted one great hurdle! The decision is the first half of the battle."*[89]

Duane remained steadfast in his determination to serve a mission and importantly he had Melanie's complete (but wistful) support. On 3 Feb 1980, the final fast Sunday before he left to serve in the New England States Mission, Mom recorded in her journal:

Today we have fasted for 2 special purposes: Duane's mission — that he and Melanie will have the strength to stay morally clean during these last emotional days before he departs. That he will then devote himself wholeheartedly, singlemindedly to his mission! And in preparation for Duane's Patriarchal Blessing, which he received today at 4 p.m. at the home of Pres. Lloyd Hunsaker. We 3, Versal, Duane, and I went there together."[90]

Eleven days later, on Thursday, 14 Feb. 1980, Mom's emotional journal entry proclaimed, *"He's gone! Our years of working, hoping, praying, preparing are ended — as we had hoped and dreamed. Duane left for the missionary training center (MTC) in Provo at 5:30 a.m."*[91]

With both Grandma Hall and Duane gone, Mom and Dad received $500.00 less per month than previously — $300.00 less for Grandma Hall's care and $200.00 less for Duane's loss as a Social Security dependent. A new cost would be Duane's monthly $280.00 mission support. *"My finances are tight at this point,"* Dad wrote a few weeks after Duane left, "But with some outside work together with social security, I'm sure I can manage."[92]

A Lesson in Pride

Someone once wrote that every moment is not equal. Some moments simply pass. Other moments determine the course of life. Dad experienced one of those defining moments in the spring of 1980. Mom recorded it in her journal.

13 April 1980

The past 3 days have brought a dramatic, traumatic experience into our lives and marriage. . . . And it may change the schedule of our lives.

It all started with innocent jesting and the usual banter between Bishop Reed Johnson and Versal. [Reed was bishop of a nearby ward.] These 2 have worked together at Ace Construction for over 25 years. Reed is the crane operator and Versal has, on many, many occasions, fixed the crane for Reed, remodeled it, helped transport it (it requires 2 men to move it from place to place — one driving the truck part and one steering that ½-block-long boom away from cars, trees power lines, houses). Anyway, Reed and Versal enjoy each other, respect each other, and always have some jesting

Inasmuch as both Versal and I had meetings at the same place, the stake center [two blocks away], and about the same time, we went over together. Versal had to wait a little while for his meeting and Bp. Johnson and [Stake] Pres. Devere McAllister [who lived in the same ward as Mom and Dad] met Versal in the foyer. Jestingly, Bp. Johnson accosted Versal with, "Where's your necktie? Pres., why don't you make this guy wear a necktie like the rest of us have been told to do!"

Versal laughed angling to where he could swipe Bp. Johnson's necktie. Then he put the tie on himself and retorted, "I don't need one. I can wear yours. It looks better on me, anyway."

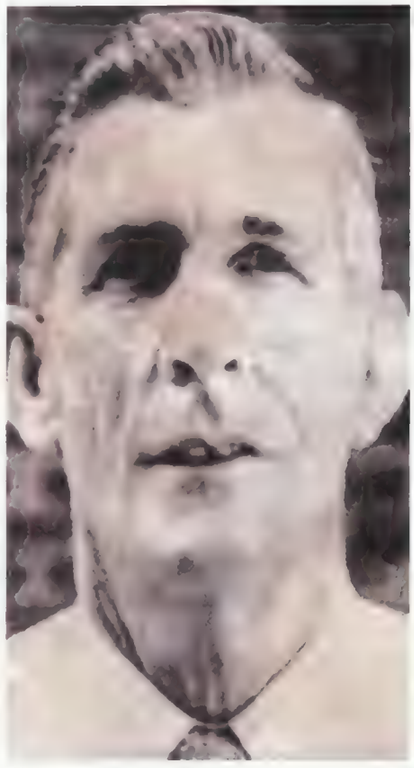
After further bantering with Reed, Versal returned the tie and they all went into the chapel for the bishopric meeting, a meeting of all members of all the 7 bishoprics in Logan Stake.

And then it happened. Pres. McAllister conducted some other business, then he turned to the subject of dress codes for the brethren in Logan Stake — and he's as strict about that as though he were still a mission president. (I certainly don't see his wife hither and yon in slacks!) At length, vehemently, he lectured on the wearing of proper suits and ties whenever a Priesthood holder was officiating for the Lord, or at a meeting, etc. On and on!

Versal was intensely humiliated, deeply hurt, feeling that the remarks were directed specifically at him — a chastisement in front of his peers! Versal, neatly dressed in a matching brown shirt, pants and his beloved (and now very stylish) cowboy boots, felt whipped in a way that only a Spiritual Leader could touch him. Almost a public beating by a superior.

When I came home at 10 p.m., Versal was sitting, very white, very quiet in one of our big rockers. I knew instantly that something drastic had happened. The whole episode burst from him in frustration and icy fury. He said: "At first I couldn't believe what I was hearing! Then I just wanted to get up and walk out even as Pres. McAllister was talking; but I hung on to myself. As soon as the meeting was over, I left — I didn't talk to anyone! I came home and you weren't here. I drove over to Bishop Norton's [the bishop he served as a counselor to] and he hadn't come home yet. I came back here. Then I drove over to the stake house and finally found Pres. McAllister. Then I told him, "I'll never be to a meeting again improperly dressed. I'll be in a white shirt, suit, and tie. But I certainly resent being told-off in front of my friends and peers. Please tell me to my face next time, privately!"

In the face of Versal's apparent anger, Pres. McA. said very little, no explanation, no apology. Though this added fuel to Versal's anger, it prevented an argument or debilitating anger on both sides. Versal further explained his long-standing friendship with Reed Johnson as well as his long, respectful work among and esteem for the laboring men — the builders who, as a rule, are the non-tie-wearing class. But, in his inherently honest way, Versal admitted that the situation under stress [the evening's meeting] was an ecclesiastical one, and he was wrong in dressing so casually as a church leader. And he left.



Bishop Reed Johnson

So Versal and I discussed the situation, but his hurt persisted — offended pride is a terrible goad. We knelt in prayer before going to bed, pleading for help. But Versal tossed and turned all night and neither of us awoke refreshed. So I suggested, "Today is Fri., the sun is shining a bit, I'm free of meetings today and so are you — let's go fishing up on Condie."

Versal cleaned out the boat; I packed a nice lunch . . . We hooked the boat, for the 1st time, behind the shiny-clean, little Toyota pickup and departed. But the wind, a very cold wind, blew and blew on Condie. We finally caught 3, but it was just too cold, so we were home long before dark. Before we retired Versal said, "Tomorrow is our Priesthood day at the temple. I should go."

So Sat. we 2 went to the temple for an Endowment Session. And that didn't help at all for many of Versal's peers were there as well as Pres. McAllister and all Versal's humiliation came flooding back. By the end of the session, Versal was so up-tight that he was white-faced and blazing-eyed. At the end of the session Pres. McA shook hands with me and asked if we'd stay for one more session — Versal hadn't joined me yet; I was waiting for him. I told Pres. McA, "I don't know if we'll be able to." For I'd seen the strained look on Versal's face all thru the session.

As Versal and I were descending to the main floor, gentle Bishop Wiser [from another Logan Stake ward] joined us and asked, "Will you 2 go thru another session with us? We're assigned 120 and I've only been able to get 80 here.

Many of us will have to repeat."

Versal flatly replied, "No, we can't." And I knew we couldn't.

When we got home, Versal tended the furnace, which is giving us trouble right now, then got in his pickup and left. Deb had arrived for a customary visit; Sis. Sandra Reese , from next door, came to ask a favor. A little later Colleen and [3-year-old] Christine dropped by. Lauris on his bicycle, Dorth on hers with Jimmy [age 5] in the kiddie-seat, and proud [6-year-old] Marci riding her little bike "all-alone" came riding in. Naturally, each visitor asked, "Where's Dad?"

And, in a little while they all departed; the Lauris Davises to pedal on down to Willow Park; Colleen and Christine to go shopping. But Deb stayed. She and Duane have learned to "read" Versal and me with uncanny accuracy, so she asked what was wrong. And we conversed at length about this terrifying problem. We decided that maybe a mission for Versal and me now, instead of in 2 years, as we'd planned, would be the solution. But there were twin hang-ups: 1. Would Versal go; would that be mere escapism? and, 2. Finances. With Duane's mission costing $280.00 a month. No way would we jeopardize his mission!

When I suggested a now-mission to Versal, for us to get a new perspective on the Lord's work, he wasn't as negative as I thot he'd be, but the running-away from the situation repelled him even more than the expense problem. And I kept thinking that Pres. McAllister would still be our Priesthood Leader when we came back. The problem just might still be here.

I'd decided to fast this day (Sat.) and ask for help. Early Sun. morning Versal mentioned that this was fast Sun. I'd forgotten that. (Sun. 6 April had been Apr. Conf.) So we prepared to pray and fast together as usual. Then I suggested that we go together to see Pres. McAllister. After a few moments of thought, I reminded him of one of Pres. McAllister's goals he'd often stressed to Stake Officers: "If you've offended or wronged anyone, anywhere, at any time, be sure it is made right." And I had faith that Pres. McA. would do this. Thankfully, Versal and I knew that the gospel teaches, also, that we should go to those who have offended us and work things out. We have discovered that study and activity in the gospel can make a person much more forgiving and understanding and tolerant of other's mistakes — and tolerant of others' intolerance. And understanding of others' idealism!



Pres. Devere McAllister

Versal readily agreed to go again to Pres. McA. I phoned his home at 7 a.m.; Ila [his wife] said the Pres was at his office at the stake center. I phone there. Pres. McA. answered. I simply said, "I have a problem. May we come and talk to you right now?" He replied, "Of course, come right over."

Versal and I knelt in prayer, then we walked over to the stake center. There I was silent as a now-calm Versal stated his problem and hurt and we all understood as Pres. McA. told us: "I had come to that meeting prepared to and intending to be very emphatic on dress codes. During the preceding month I'd encountered 2 problems: First, I'd attended a ward meeting where the brethren were very carelessly dressed and the ward reflects it — there are problems and carelessness in ward administration. I hope to help them to take pride in themselves as the Lord's workers and in his work. Second, we've been having some problems with the youth in our stake and I've been interviewing many of them. When I demand that they come to an interview dressed appropriately, they act and talk differently than if they come slouching in."

Then Pres. McA. assured Versal again and again that he'd meant no personal offense, had certainly not been directing his remarks at Versal. He came over to Versal, put his arms around him, and crying, begged his forgiveness. There were tears 3 ways.

Versal, trying to erase the tears said laughingly, "We'd even talked of escaping on a mission now."

Pres. McA. became very earnest: "A mission! Would you go on a mission now? Please don't wait until Duane gets home [in 2 years]! We desperately need adult couples, and we just can't get many to go from our stake. Would you go soon? You're needed now!"

So we discussed the mission possibilities and problems for a time and we promised to consider it very seriously and prayerfully. And in the new light of love and understanding, not escapism.

. . . Gratefully, Versal and I bore our testimonies in fast meeting that day. I so much love Versal. I'm proud of him!"



Chapter Ten

Our Mission

Aug. 1980-Dec. 1981

VLD
CS

After over four decades of dedicated work and consistent nurturing to support a houseful of children and others, Dad, age 64, and Mom, age 63, suddenly found themselves mostly alone in the spring of 1980.

Their six oldest children were married and gone. Still-single-but-living-at-home Deb, age 24, was either attending classes at U.S.U. or off with friends most of the time. Duane, age 19, had left on his mission to New England in mid-February. And a mere five days after his departure, Grandma Hall, Mom's 87-year-old mother, who had lived with Mom and Dad for six years, had died after a brief bout with the flu.

Feeling strangely odd in the quiet, empty house, Dad wrote in his journal in March, "Mom and I seem to rattle around here quite a bit."[1] After Dad's misunderstanding with Pres. McAllister in April (see pp. 269-271) they began talking "mission."

Six weeks later, after receiving a newsy, upbeat letter from Duane, Dad recorded his pride in his son's mission progress by jotting an ebullient, "Great going!!" in his journal. Then he wrote:

"Speaking of missions!!! Mom and I decided on applying for assignment. We have turned in all of our formal paper requests and have had our dental and physical checkups. We are now waiting for our call.

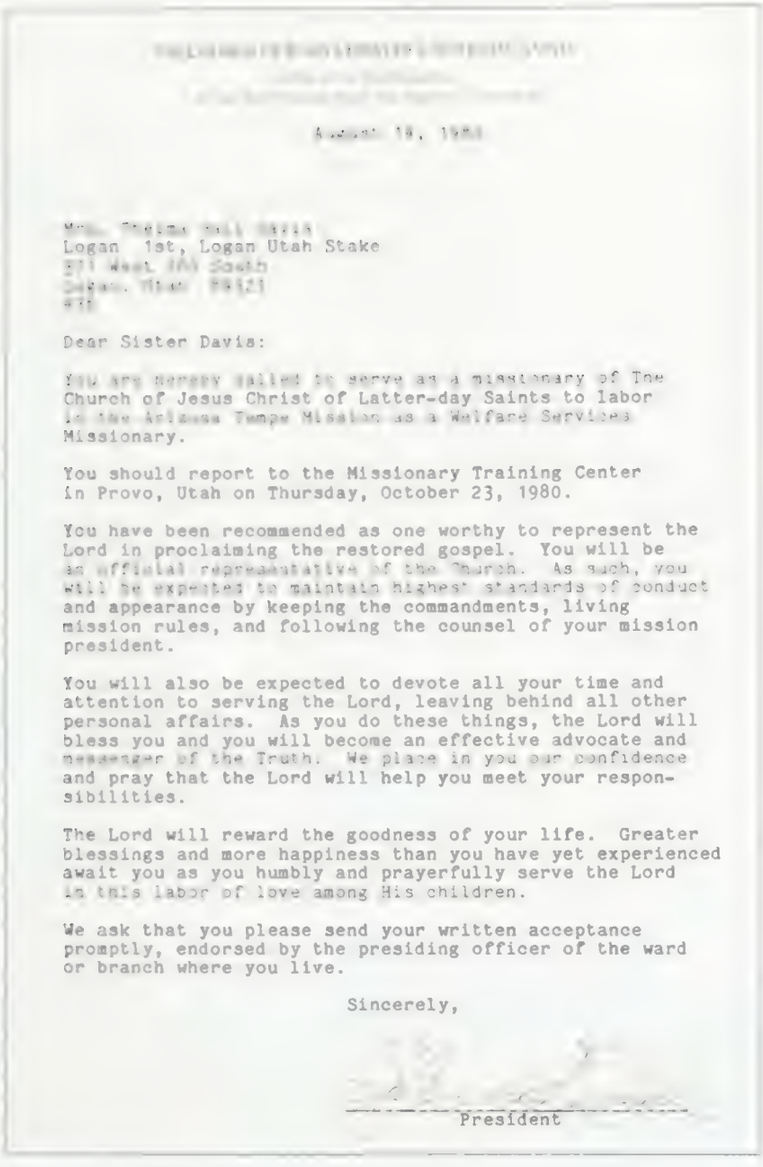
"Our finances will be tight but I'm sure they can be arranged. Tam and John are going to stay and rent our home while we are gone. Preparations seem to be endless. My bishopric duties are many but rewarding. I've done considerable temple work this summer especially in the baptistry. I almost hate to discontinue this in favor of a mission. I am in my 4th year as a 1st counselor [in the bishopric]."[2]

Mom and Dad's "rattling around" in an empty house was short-lived for John and Tami and their three children moved in with them in early summer. John had finished his military hitch in Florida, and had obtained a job working at Gossner's Cheese in Logan. The Clarks needed a furnished home and Mom and Dad needed someone to watch over theirs while they served their mission, so the two families shared quarters for a few months until mission departure time.

While waiting to leave, Dad worked as much as he could at Ace Mill to pad their small financial reserve and got in as much fishing as he could manage. On 5 Oct. 1980, two weeks before their departure, he wrote:

"Mom and I are going to go on our last fishing trip tomorrow. We plan to visit Blackfoot Reservoir, stay overnight there, then on our way home Tues. we will launch the boat on Condie Res. We have spent many enjoyable hours together while fishing and I'm going to feel badly about giving this up for 18 months."[3]

Elder Versal Davis and Sister Thelma Davis, newly called welfare services missionaries, pose for a photo at the Mission Training Center in Provo, Utah, 19 Nov. 1980.



August 18, 1980

Mrs. Thelma Hall Davis
Logan 1st, Logan Utah Stake
[illegible] West 100 South
Logan, Utah 84321

Dear Sister Davis:

You are hereby called to serve as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to labor in the Arizona Tempe Mission as a Welfare Services Missionary.

You should report to the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah on Thursday, October 23, 1980.

You have been recommended as one worthy to represent the Lord in proclaiming the restored gospel. You will be an official representative of the Church. As such, you will be expected to maintain highest standards of conduct and appearance by keeping the commandments, living mission rules, and following the counsel of your mission president.

You will also be expected to devote all your time and attention to serving the Lord, leaving behind all other personal affairs. As you do these things, the Lord will bless you and you will become an effective advocate and messenger of the Truth. We place in you our confidence and pray that the Lord will help you meet your responsibilities.

The Lord will reward the goodness of your life. Greater blessings and more happiness than you have yet experienced await you as you humbly and prayerfully serve the Lord in this labor of love among His children.

We ask that you please send your written acceptance promptly, endorsed by the presiding officer of the ward or branch where you live.

Sincerely,

President

Mom's mission call (identical to Dad's), 14 Aug. 1980.

They learned in accompanying documents they would be serving in a branch composed of Maricopa Indians, one of several tribes on the Gila Indian Reservation. They also discovered they would live among the Indians on the reservation.[4]

The duties of Welfare Services Missionaries are described as follows in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism:

A Welfare Services missionary program responds to requests from Church units around the world with special needs that exceed local resources. Primarily young women and older persons with special skills are called to go, at their own expense, to these areas to train people in basic child development, family relations, nutrition, sanitation, health care, social work, counseling, and agriculture or vocational training. In 1990 there were about 280 Welfare Services missionaries.[5]

The Call

(Dad's Journal 1, p. 58 — 4 Aug. 1980)

We received our appointments and were somewhat surprised and dismayed in them. [See Mom's comments in Chapter Note 6.] We expected departure in early Sept. but the date has been set for Oct. 22. Also the area is one of question — it is in a hot area and may present some [health] problems. We expect to be working with Indians as welfare services missionaries.

I've wondered a great deal about just what I may be called to do. But whatever, we accept the call and will do our best. The mission is the Arizona Tempe Mission. One ray of hope is that we will be there for only one summer compared to two winters. We will arrive back home in the spring of 1982 in time to plant a garden. Duane will precede this by about two months [when he returns from his mission in New England].

Financial arrangements are going to be difficult to handle. Approximate cost to finance us, Duane, tithing, and home expense will be about $1100 per month. Fortunately, I have a few thousand in retirement savings, which I can use. I worry some, however, about not having a buffer fund in our last years. It should be easy to consecrate one's wealth to such a cause, but I truly have some minor reservations. The family, however, has pledged to help some and each member has voiced his or her approval of our going.

In a Sense, He Did Go

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 21)

Versal, before you leave I'd like to give you something — that is, if you will accept it." Zola remarked.

"Well, Zola, coming from you I'd be pleased to receive almost anything," I replied.

Thelma and I were sitting on Zola's front room couch as she left the room and entered her bedroom. Soon she reappeared carefully carrying a cellophane bag which covered a brown article within.

I soon recognized this to be a beautiful dress suit. I gazed in awe and disbelief.

"I want you to have it. You see, Lowell purchased this just a few days before his fatal heart attack. He

purchased it to wear on our mission."

Thelma and I were speechless as tears dimmed our eyes. Words would not come but I arose and embraced Zola as I cried unashamedly.

Lowell, who had been my dearest friend, had passed away about a year earlier. I had sung a solo at his service and I was pleased to have been asked. After his death, Thelma and I had often dropped in to see Zola at her home in Bountiful.

Thelma and I had applied for and received our own mission calls and we had stopped in to tell Zola about it. She was pleased to learn of this, but a note of sadness was detected when she spoke of Lowell's and her intended, but thwarted, plans.

As we left to go I said to her, "Zola, in a sense, when this suit goes into the mission field, Lowell will be there also."

She embraced me and said, "Goodbye."

We never saw her again. She also passed away while Mom and I were on the Gila River Indian Reservation serving our mission with a much-appreciated, beautiful, brown suit.





Lowell and Zola Keller were Dad and Mom's life-long friends dating back to their school days in St. Anthony, Idaho. Photos, 1967.

Right: **The announcement of Mom and Dad's mission call** as it appeared in Logan's newspaper, The Herald Journal, Oct. 20, 1980.



Versal and Thelma Davis

Accept call to LDS Mission

Thelma and Versal Davis have accepted a call to the Arizona Tempe LDS Mission where they will serve as welfare missionaries among the Indians.

Their farewell testimonial was held in the Logan 1st LDS Ward Sunday. They will leave for their mission on Wednesday.

Mrs. Davis has served as the Logan Stake Relief Society president and Versal has been the first counselor in the Logan 1st LDS Ward bishopric.

A Milestone

(Dad's Journal 1, p. 64 — 17 Oct. 1980)

Today marks a milestone in my life in the labor field. Today, I brought all my tools home from Ace Mill. Tomorrow is my 65th birthday and next Wednesday Mom and I will be heading for the mission home in Provo. It is rather sobering to realize that, for the first time in my life, I will not be in the labor market. However, I surely hope I will be able to continue for a few years more after my return from our mission area. Time will tell.



Dad stands in front of the Mission Training Center building complex adjacent to the Brigham Young University campus in Provo, Utah, October 1980.

Mission Training Center

(Selected MTC Journal Entries)

October 22, 1980 (Dad's journal) — Well, here we are at last. I'm writing this in room #4M105 of the Mathew Cowley Building at the M.T.C. (Mission Training Center). Mom and I just returned from a delicious supper in the cafeteria, which is located in the main building of this huge complex. Over 2,000 missionaries are residing here at this time.

We left home at 11:30 this morning. Our little Toyota truck is heavily loaded as is the two-wheel trailer, which tags behind. The many tools, equipment, food supplies, household gear, clothing, books, etc. have added up to quite a lot. Even with all we have with us I'm sure we'll have to eventually get more when we arrive in Arizona. But, we are comfortably situated in our assigned apartment at this time and are preparing for a battery of informational sessions to help orient us while here.

We feel good about our affairs at home as they rest with Tam and John in the home and Lauris looking after our financial affairs. It is good to know we can leave such things to our chicks.

Dad — Nov. 1, 1980

I'm sitting at our apartment desk as the clock reads 1 o'clock a.m. At this early hour I'm nursing a bad head cold and sore throat. I have had this problem for two days and it seems to remain with me. But, like most afflictions of this nature, I'm sure it will soon wear off.

This learning experience here has been a broad and comprehensive collection of lectures, study classes, demonstrations, visual aids and other media. It becomes almost mind-boggling to absorb and retain the vast information we are bombarded with.

Mom — Nov. 7, 1980

Our stay here has been like a honeymoon — doing things we love together, being together, sharing everything. There's such a warmth and peace. We've been able to resolve our few differences quickly, and I'm amazed at how often he'll (Dork) express something I've just thot, or make a suggestion that's on the tip of my tongue. Besides our lectures, seminars, classes, and rap-sessions, we do some team-teaching and they're fun. Years ago we did a lot of team-teaching and we enjoyed it, but then Versal kinda expected me to lead out. But now he really takes hold and is very clever and creative.

Dad — Nov. 9, 1980

Mom and I approach our responsibilities with the Lamanites with greater and greater resolve. Our training here, I'm sure, will be very valuable in the field as we serve on the Maricopa Indian Reservation. I understand the Indians there are known as the Pima Tribe.

Dad — Nov. 13, 1980

I am sitting at a table in the MTC laundry room. Mom is operating the machines as we take advantage of the allotted time on 'P' (Preparation) day. This is also the day the new young missionaries arrive. This can be attested to by viewing the immense assortment of luggage pieces in the main building.

Since we came here, I've been thinking about something. It is this: For some years now I've often asked myself this question: Have I reached the point in life when I must admit that I've reached the fork in the road, which shortly leads to old age? I've often admitted that, in terms of years, I'm getting along but my health has been very good and so I've kept telling myself that I was still far from that inevitable crossroad. But after seeing this awesome collection of young men and women here I can't kid myself any longer. They run here. They run there. They laugh. They sing. They radiate energy and enthusiasm. I can hardly remember the years when I must have appeared the same way. Being young and vigorous is truly glorious.

But, I am not dismayed. I am grateful I feel as well as I do. Surely life has been kind to me. Mom and I are both in very good health and are optimistic about the future even though we walk now rather than run.

Sister Thelma Davis, welfare services missionary trainee, with her blue mission journal and red MTC binder on her lap, sits in a comfortable chair at the MTC between classes, 19 Nov. 1980.



Old Fritz and the Howard Girl

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 145)

Old Fritz was a favorite dog which I owned for a short time after Thelma and I were married. In another Flashback called "Dogs I've Owned" (p. 104), I told of this encounter with a young neighbor girl. I was forced to kill the dog because of his dangerous nature.

But this episode had an interesting second chapter. It went like this:

In 1980 Thelma and I were in Provo, Utah, at the Missionary Training Center. One evening we exited from the cafeteria building and were returning to our assigned room to retire for the night. Two people were crossing the same area that we were and from the lady I heard this remark: "Brother Davis, gee, it's good to see you here. Are you a missionary also?"

Stopping and looking her way, I said, "Yes, Thelma and I are training here."

She and her husband walked up to us and she evidently noticed my consternation and then said, "You know me, don't you?"

"Well, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I don't. You look familiar but I've forgotten your name."

Then she said, "I'm one of the Howard girls who used to live near you and this is my husband, Brother Welker."

Then I recognized her in a vague way and said, "Well, you remember my wife Thelma don't you?"

"You bet I do," she replied.

After a few general remarks in getting reacquainted, I said, "I recall when a dog of mine attacked and bit the wrist of one of your sisters. I was mortified when that took place."

"What do you mean 'one of my sisters'? That was me!" she replied emphatically. "In fact, I've still got the scars." Whereupon she turned her wrist so I could see it plainly. There were the telltale scars that Thelma and I had dressed and bandaged as open, bleeding wounds forty years ago.

I then told her that I had destroyed the dog the next day after the event took place.

To this she uttered real dismay and said, "I'm awfully sorry you did that. I didn't know until now."

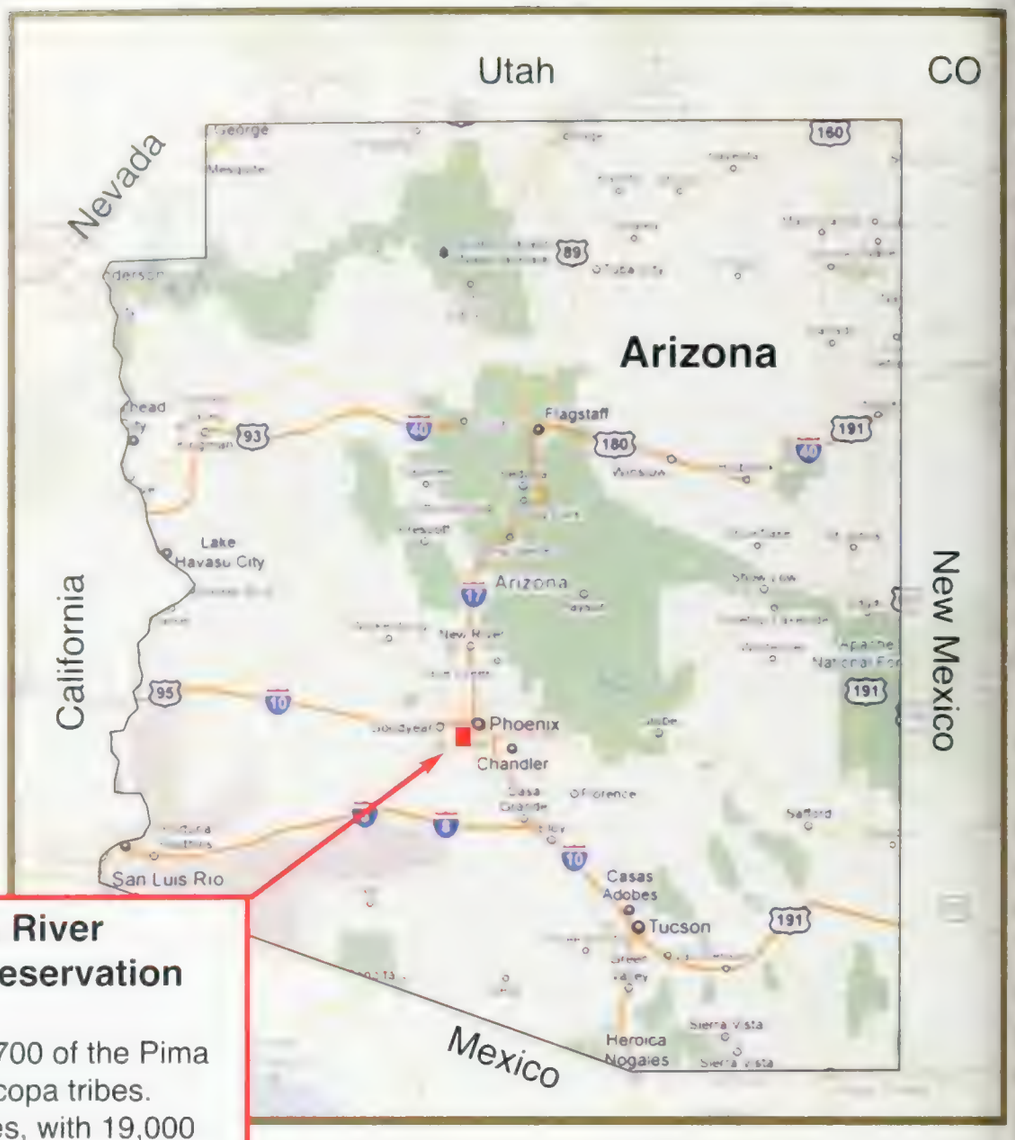
So again I remembered a choice shepherd and cattle dog even after forty years.

First Impressions

(Mom's Journal — Nov. 22, 1980)

We turned south and traveled about ½ mile to a little green cinder block church surrounded by a high, mesh fence topped with 3 strands of barbed wire. But the gate into the big churchyard was broken, ½ of it flat on the ground. The grass was just a few dry tufts here and there. Three stunted palms grew in the front and three other trees in the back drooped from lack of water.

And there, on the north side of the little church, stood a big, long trailer house (mobile home is the correct name, Versal says). White, not new, but certainly far more than Versal and I need, it's quite palatial for this humble vicinity. It's very much like the one Brent & Inge had, and the one Lauris and Dorth had. Two bedrooms, big bath, good-sized kitchen and frontroom. Color scheme brown and burnt-orange throughout.



Gila River Indian Reservation

* Home to 8,700 of the Pima and Maricopa tribes.
* 52,600 acres, with 19,000 held as a natural reserve.
* Maricopas are known for their red pottery.
* 84 LDS Church members in 1980, at beginning of Mom and Dad's mission.

But the sobering, humbling thing is how hard Pres. Farrell, his wife, his counselors, and their wives have worked to get this trailer house (cost $7800), move it here, hook it up to the little church's water system, electric system, telephone system, scrub and clean it, then donate some of their own furniture to furnish it.

All of the branch leadership organization is white and all must drive a minimum of 10 miles each way to try to make this branch go, but they've been losing ground. Pres. Farrell hasn't missed a single meeting here in the year he's been Branch President. In fact, he's averaged a minimum of 2 trips a week out here. He's hauled Indians to church, back home, to activities and back home. He and his wife have done the janitor work; he's fixed pipes, toilets, broken windows, jimmied doors. But, in spite of all, and the Indian kids love him, they haven't one single active male Indian member of Priesthood age, and only 4 active women who come and bring about a dozen children.

The stake certainly has tried to give top-talent to this struggling branch. But after a year of such intense effort, Pres. Farrell explained to us: "We just didn't know what else to do. We've pleaded and prayed for help. We've done everything we knew how to do. Sometimes we've felt like asking the stake to close this Branch — but we just couldn't. We knew it had to go, somehow! You're the answer to our prayers."

But the prayers will have to be increased now! How can we, 2 very naïve people, possibly be an answer to such fervent prayers if we aren't guided by the Spirit of the Lord!

And I listen to the wind howl outside, and occasionally the gaunt dogs around here, unusually so silent — definitely not white man's barking kind, howling so much like coyotes that even Versal has to listen carefully and finally say: "I believe they're dogs running. I think." [Dad later realized they were indeed coyotes.]

It's eerie at night. I turn up the stereo as I write to keep the chills down.

Maricopa Indian Branch

(Dad's Journal 1, p. 74. — 23 Nov. 1980)

I'm sitting at our table in the mobile home which has been set up for us on property which also supports the LDS chapel. This location is approximately 15 miles southwest of Phoenix. The area is quite flat and consists of farmland which grows cotton, alfalfa, row crops, and orchards. This is an Indian reservation and is quite bereft of lawns, flowers, and other non-essential growth. The homes are very modest, being small frame or masonry. Also many trailer-type residences are evident. Some units are accompanied by a ramshackle shed or perhaps, an outhouse. The area is generally dusty.

But, our mobile home is quite nice and convenient with all the regular utilities connected to it.

We moved into this home-away-from-home just yesterday. The branch president, a Brother Farrell, helped us get situated. Everybody has been very helpful and cordial, even many of the local Lamanite population.

We attended the first meetings today and were asked to talk. This we did and then held an informal open house after church. These people are very relaxed and pay little attention to a clock.

One Active Member

Talkative, friendly Wilma Redbird, was the Maricopa Branch's only active adult (on a roster of 84) on the first Sunday Mom and Dad attended church. But she was excitedly preoccupied by a Church News photographer that day thus their formal acquaintance with her was delayed. However, Mom and Dad soon got to know Wilma very well.

A product of the Church's Indian Placement Program, she and her twin sister, Winona, were considered "apples" by the other Indians — red on the outside, white on the inside.[9]

Eight months later, when the *Church News* feature article finally appeared, Mom wrote in her journal:

When the "Church News" came today, I was somewhat critical as I read the article on Wilma Redbird. She'd told me yesterday that the story, photographed on our 1st Sunday here, 23 Nov. 1980, was finally out. . . Naturally Wilma is excited, yet sad. This [glowing] article was true [when it was] written [and] Wilma was at the peak of her status here — the lone, active, faithful, worthy member here in this Branch.[10]

Discouragingly, though, as Mom and Dad came to know Wilma, they became acquainted with her personal demons. Though "active," she struggled with deep and complicated issues, which weren't unique to her; they were pervasive in the Indian community. Her active church status was hollow.



The back of the Maricopa Branch Chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the Gila Indian Reservation near Phoenix, Arizona. Mom and Dad lived in the mobile home to the right — she called it "Our long, tin box," 1981.



Wilma Redbird, right, walks with Branch Pres. Darrell F. Farrell and a group of Primary children under her direction after a meeting at Maricopa, Ariz.

This photo of **Primary President Wilma Redbird and Branch President Darrell F. Farrell with some of the children in the Maricopa Branch** accompanied the feature article about Wilma in the July 11, 1981 issue of the Church News. (The handwritten labeling is Mom's.) The photograph is only one of many the photographer took on Mom and Dad's first Sunday in the mission field (23 Nov. 1980). His presence on that day caused quite a stir in the tiny Maricopa Branch, as did Mom and Dad's arrival. Their mobile home, which had been set up next to the church, was a novelty, too, for they were its first occupants. Mom wrote:

We had invited everyone to come over for a tour of the trailer as there's a lot of curiosity about it. . . . We had excited Indian children running around eating apples we'd set on our steps in a box for their treat . . . and here came the photographer. . . we got the full photographic treatment here in our trailer: pose here by the fridge, here by the door, never look at the camera, talk to each other, act natural. And on and on. He asked very few questions of us and we surely couldn't have told him much.[11] None of the photos of Mom and Dad were printed in the resulting article.

The Redbirds' Dogs

(Mom's Mission Journal, 19 Jan. 1981)

In the middle of a field, in a semicircle are 4 or 5 homes (I can't always tell an Indian home!). Anyway, in this cluster at the end of a rough lane live the Gaylurd [and Wilma] Redbirds [see map on p. 285].

So at last we were at our 1 active member's home! Wilma, in curlers because of a short new haircut, came hurrying out to meet us accompanied by a cross she-dog, 4 fat mongrel pups and 3 cats. We had to step most carefully. Near the rough, weed-strewn, brushy yard were small pens for 2 sheep & a lamb and 2 or 3 small horses. Aha! Pres. Farrell had told us that the owning of horses was a status symbol — they were never used or ridden, but they were important. Gaylurd Redbird's penned, scroungy horses were the 1st we've seen right here at Maricopa Colony. . . We'd waited 'til late in the afternoon to go there, hoping that big Gaylurd would be there, but he wasn't. We know that somehow we must try to get thru to him for his LDS wife and kid's sake. We know, too, that he's a descendant of the ruling (once) Redbird line and, as such, haughtily clings the most fiercely to Indian traditions of wakes, cremation with pomp & ceremony, keeping horses for status, avoiding the whites as much as possible, etc. — also witch doctors! But he does work!

But Versal retreated from that mass of dogs (5), cats (7 were finally in evidence), kids, weeds, can, boards. Every time he'd stumbled over a snoopy pup, the mother dog was there bristling. You can image how he scolded all the way home. Versal hopes Gaylurd will let him help fix his pickup. Time will tell![12]

Dad and Mom found out why the Redbirds tolerated — loved — their dogs a few months later. Mom wrote on 7 March 1981:

[Gaylurd Redbird, Wilma's husband] told us that a pack of dogs had killed one of their little lambs night before last, so he'd had to build a high, tight fence to put their other 2 in. I asked if maybe it wasn't killed by coyotes. He said: "No, the dogs came back."

We know that Indians do not kill dogs — at least the Maricopa don't. I quote from their own history: 'Horse meat was eaten but not dog, 'because a dog is a person' (*Yuman Tribes of the Gila River,* Spier, pp. 74, 254). . . So, Gaylurd, the very tradition-bound Redbird had fenced-in his sheep, but had not a hint of resentment toward the dogs. . . . Now I understand why Wilma loves and kisses and fondles that mean bitch she has and they keep all her pups.[13]

Thanksgiving

(Dad's Journal 1, p. 75 — 30 Nov. 1980)

Instead of visiting the Farrell's for Thanksgiving, Mom and I drove to [my nephew] Dean Davis' place where we enjoyed a very good dinner. Also, we met some of the family (Floyd's), which I had not seen for many years. Dean's children were there, most of whom I had never seen before. His son is a 'dead ringer' of his father. His daughters are very attractive and very nice. I'm sure Floyd is very proud of all of them. LaVern and his family were there; I hadn't seen them for 30 years. Darrell and his wife and children were there also. I hadn't seen them for five or six years. [My sister] Vera and Bert joined us also. So, all in all, this was a good-sized representation of the Davis clan. It did seem strange that this took place in Arizona rather than Idaho. But years have a tendency to uproot families and scatter them in various places. Our immediate family is quite widely separated at this time.

One does not need a sign to indicate the boundaries of the [Maricopa Indian] reservation. One side has typical, white people homes with nice yards, barns, machinery, trees, cattle, etc. The other is a helter-skelter arrangement of very humble wood or clay boarded huts. Usually a gaunt dog is near. Perhaps one may see a nice car but usually old dilapidated ones are parked in various positions around the dusty premises. One thing I must admit, however, is that in most cases, the yards are clean and free from rubbish.



Versal LaVel Davis and his older sister, Vera Davis Loveland, on Christmas Day, 1980.

Mom and Dad joined the Lovelands on both Thanksgiving and Christmas. On Thanksgiving they dined in Phoenix at the home of their nephew, Dean Davis, the son of Versal and Vera's brother, Floyd Davis. On Christmas they drove to Mesa, where they enjoyed each other's company at Bert and Vera's winter home.

Dad and Vera were the last survivors in a family of nine siblings.

Golden Plates

(Mom's Journal — Jan. 15, 1981)

We found a Sears store where Versal bought his needed router ($60) and I found some black elastic. . . . Versal cut out the wood to make another set of gold plates to use as a visual aid. He made one years ago in Logan & it was much used, even in Switzerland by Brent.

I'm Apache!

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 160)

You go on in the store. I'll wait here in the car," Thelma said, after we had parked our little Toyota pickup in front of the somewhat broken down store. This simple commercial building was just off the Gila River Indian Reservation. It was patronized by some white people but mostly by Indians from the reservation.

I went inside to purchase an article or two and while doing so, the following took place:

Thelma was sitting quietly in the truck when she observed a rickety car drive up and park near our unit. An Indian man got out and walked into the store. An Indian woman remained in the car. Thelma casually glanced toward the lady and noticed that she was looking back at her. This woman was holding two fingers in an upright position. Thelma thought this was strange yet she did not realize the significance of the gesture. She turned away and then looked again at the Indian woman. The lady was becoming more emphatic and more determined to get Thelma's attention. However Thelma again diverted her gaze elsewhere until the Indian lady got hurriedly out of the car, stood by it, and again very, very plainly again held up the two fingers. By this time Thelma felt that she should at least try to find out what the woman was trying to do. She got out of the truck and walked over to the Indian woman.

"'Don't you know what this means?" The lady demanded of Thelma as she held up the two fingers again.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Thelma meekly replied.



Mom's Journal: ***"Laveen Country Store, the one store near the reservation,*** *but Wow! Did it jack-up its prices! This is where the Apache woman told me whites weren't wanted on the reservation.*

"Well, it means come over here."

Thelma then realized she had disregarded a common Indian custom. She apologized and then asked what the Indian lady wanted.

Without directly answering, the woman said, very emphatically, "You white people are not welcome on the reservation! This is Indian land."

"Well, I'm sorry I didn't mean to offend you."

"Get off this land. We don't want you around here," The lady said.

"My husband and I are church missionaries and we would like to help you if we can," Thelma replied.

"We don't need you. We don't want you," the Indian lady replied.

Then Thelma made a statement, which was truly inspired as she said, "Not even if we love you?"

The lady started to say something then held back. She obviously was shaken by Thelma's question. Finally she said, "Well, well maybe it will be alright."

At about this precise time I exited from the store and walked toward Thelma. This short Indian lady immediately confronted me and majestically said, "I'm an Apache and I've got eight kids."

Whereupon I replied, "Well isn't that a coincidence? That's exactly how many Mom and I have."

That broke the ice. This lady then told us, in friendly Indian fashion, about herself, her children, her husband, and her Indian heritage.

This was a confrontation which turned into a heart-warming experience as we exchanged remarks.

Incidents such as this finally cemented our acceptance with the Indian people.



"A shot of our front door view," wrote Mom of this photo. The home Mom and Dad called the "Redbird Pit" is at the left, with its outdoor metal cot on this side. The Pee Posh Community Center is the large, flat-roofed building in the center. The two cars are driving down "Redbird Lane." The trailer house to the right is the home of Mom and Dad's beloved-but-troubled Red and Lennidine McMillan family. (Refer to Mom's sketched map on p. 285.)[16]

The Redbird Pit

Mom — 5 Jan. 1981

The front door view from our trailer house has many defects, foremost of which is the Redbird Pit. It's bad enough at drinking-party-then-urinating time; but now Marcianne, her little boy, Peanut, and her present lover, a young Mexican wetback we know only as Chris, use the open-air on our side of the Redbird Pit as their bedroom. Within 25 feet of the road, in full view of 5 homes, all bedroom activities take place. There's an old mattress-less metal bed there. That's all. Oh, they do have a tarp or blanket. They stay abed until the flies become unbearable or some drunks kick them out. Then Marcianne grabs Peanut and leaves abruptly. Chris gets up more sullenly, deliberately. But he usually soon goes to drinking with them.

Mom — 11 May 1981

There must have been a big drinking party at the Redbird Pit Sun. nite. . . Someone must have issued orders, for Sadie's 3 littlest kids came out to "clean the yard." They spent quite some time carefully salvaging all the aluminum cans. Wow! They have boxes and boxes of them now. But the bottles and other cans they threw at random into the empty lot on the south side — and those kids are good, experienced throwers. And my! they're good bottle breakers!

Bernard, Sadie's husband, has been staggering in and out of the Pit this weekend, too. What pathetic parents — Bernard and Sadie Donahue! And 8 kids, intensely loyal to each other, but so well versed in lying, cheating, stealing, every subterfuge and all animalistic vices!

Mom — 24 June 1981

One morning last week I watched Chris very carefully shake something from his always-present red head turban onto a piece of paper then funnel it into a white envelope or pouch which he pocketed. In a little while Terry Yaramata and Richard Romine and Chris sat on our side of the Redbird Pit as Terry carefully took the pouch proffered by Chris, made and rolled a cigarette from the contents and the 3 smoked it in turn again and again. Chris repocketed the pouch.

Mom — 5 July 1981

[Today] after an apparently slow start, the Redbird Pit booze club is really warming up. This day there were about 15 adults circulating and drinking there amidst the 9 little kids.

Mom — 5 Aug. 1981

None of the [adults] work — at home or abroad. . . They're all master "sitters" — endlessly standing or sitting in groups, endlessly talking. There are no chairs or couches. They sit on and lean on cars, on crates, on the old cot.

Suspicious Indians

Journal 3 pp. 77-79 — 2 Dec. 1950

"Well, what do you want that picture for?" the heavy-set, cowboy-dressed, middle-aged, buck Indian asked.

"I just want a photo of that piece of equipment," I replied.

This conversation was partly the result of my wanting to see a close-up of a large beetle-like cotton harvester. This particular machine had, while operating in the large cotton field, caught fire and burned profusely. It now sat abandoned where the accident took place about one-fourth mile from the nearest public road. The field is only about one-half mile from our residence here at the branch meetinghouse.

I had intimated to Thelma that I'd like a picture of one of these monstrous machines so, just prior to sundown, I walked down the public road until I was opposite the derelict as it rested among the rows of cotton. To reach it, however, I had to go through a yard upon which was one of the simple Indian homes.



Dad's photo of the burned-out "beetle" cotton harvester

As I entered the premises I was met by a very good looking, 30'ish Indian who greeted me. I returned the salutation and asked if I could go across the property to the machine.

"Yea, sure. Go right ahead," he politely answered.

About this time the cowboy-type appeared from around the north side of the old house. He confronted me and said, "What do you want to go over there for?"

"I'd like to obtain a photograph of the cotton picker," I simply replied.

Obviously irritated, he said in very explicit words, "This is Indian land and you are not welcome here. You're the second man to come here."

"Well, I mean no harm and if you resent my being here then I'll simply forget about the picture."

I turned as if to go back when the first Indian said, "You can go take your picture. I say so!" He was very resolute as he said this and at the same time placed his large hands against the complaining one.

I hesitated and turned back toward them when the second Indian asked why I wanted the picture.

I replied again, "I simply want a print. I have no intention of causing trouble. I came in here to ask your permission to walk over to the machine."

"You go right ahead," the first reasserted.

Thereupon I thanked them and proceeded around the south side of the rickety old house. During this time the complaining Indian was being pushed back around the north side to a table around which a woman and another huge male were sitting.

As I walked past I heard part of what was being discussed: "I don't want, any da—ed insurance man around here..."

I stopped, looked over toward them, and then even though any one of them could probably beat me to a pulp, I promptly confronted them again and said, "Now listen, I say again, I have no desire to go across your property unless I know I'm welcome."

The first Indian, for the third time, said, "You go take the picture."

Then, very sullenly, the second buck said, "Yea, go ahead. It's alright with me."

I was surprised to hear this. I suppose there must have been a little tribal authority exerted on him. So, I simply voiced my thanks again and walked along the cotton rows until I reached the machine. Here I snapped about three frames and then walked back to the scene of the last confrontation.

"Did you get some pictures?" I was asked by the first man.

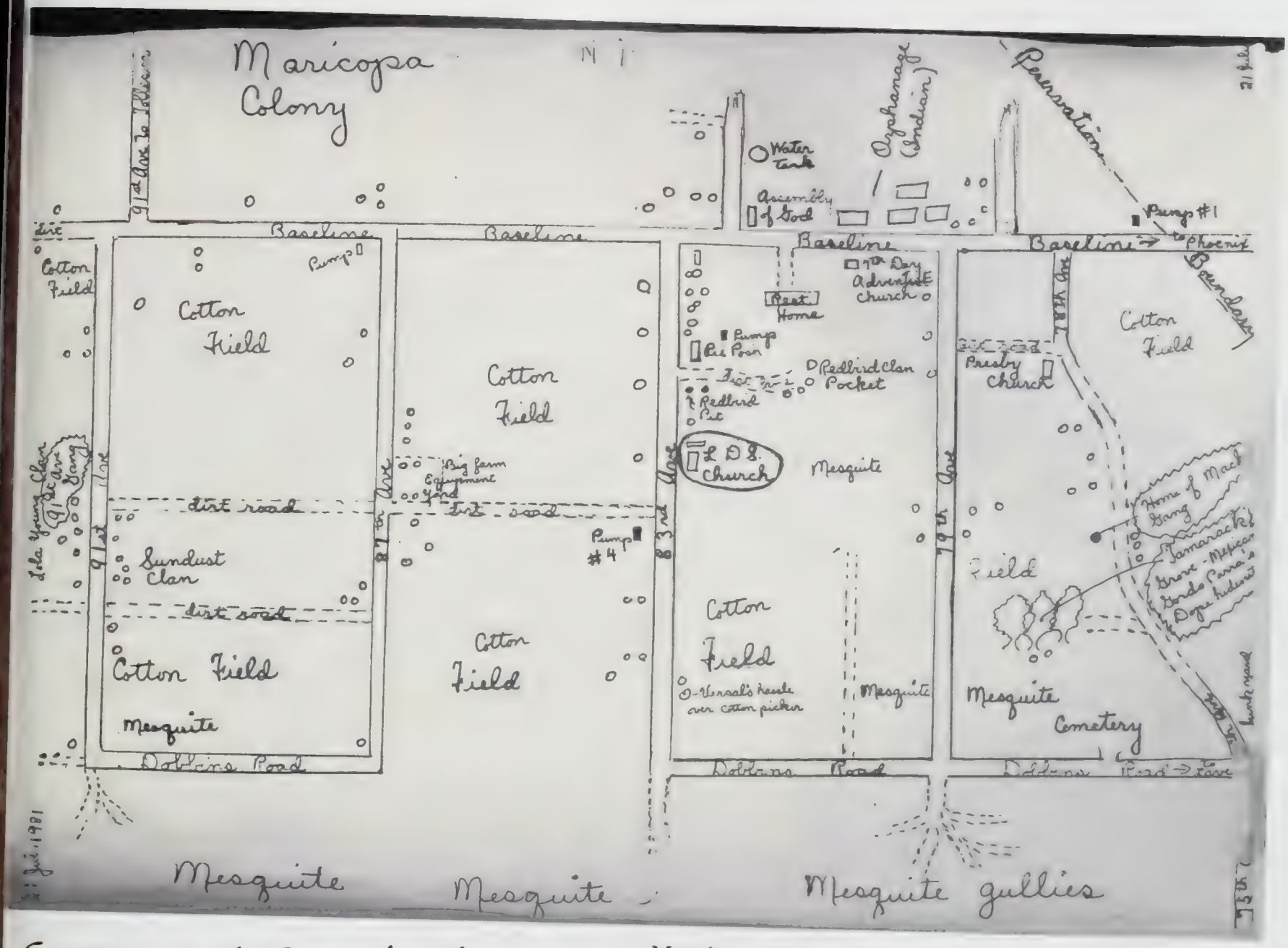
"Yes, I surely did and I appreciate your permission to go over there."

Then I was asked where I lived and I told them, whereupon the formerly indignant one said, "Say, that's where I used to play volleyball."

"Yea, we surely did," the second added.

The cowboy-Indian remarked again, "We used to go there and play but we had to go to a meetin' first." The others laughed but again the cowboy said, "But that was OK. It didn't hurt us none."

I asked if any were members but none were. However, I assured them that the court would be available. When I left I felt I had made some new friends.



Sacrament Bread Thieves

(Dad's Journal 1, p. 89 — 28 Dec. 1980)

A knock was heard on the front door of our mobile home. I responded and opened the sliding door to admit Pres. Farrell.

"Bro. Davis, do you suppose you could provide two or three slices of bread for sacrament service this morning?"

"Why, surely," I replied as I noted his frustration.

"I wouldn't ask this of you, but — well — you see, I no longer have the bread I brought from home."

"Well, where is it? Did you eat it on the way out here?" I asked somewhat jokingly.

"No, I didn't do that, but a couple of local thieves got away with it."

I looked somewhat perplexed and then he added, "I opened my car door and left it open while I unlocked the church door. When I returned I found two dogs on the front seat lapping up the morsels."

Mom's map of the general lay of the land around the church and their mobile home (center). She even indicated the location of the Dad's hassle regarding his attempt to take a photo of a burned out cotton harvester in the cotton field directly below the church. They were the only whites living on the reservation.

Mom and Dad made a more comprehensive, refined, and highly detailed map of the whole Maricopa Colony, which local authorities and civic organizations eventually copied and used. (See partial map on pp. 308 & 309.) Dad calibrated distances and drew the maps to scale and Mom filled in the information, a process that took months.

During the course of their map-making, Mom received help from Vernita Sunn, an Indian woman who regularly visited each home in the Colony and knew everyone. Mom wrote: *Vernita Sunn stopped in to collect the water bill (this she does every other month). She's a pleasant person and perfect for her money-collecting job. And naturally, she's the best-informed member of the Colony. She loves to talk. However, today I trotted out my map and Vernita happily furnished much missing information. Really it's a detailed map-census.*

When completed on July 21, Mom and Dad "Xeroxed" 6 copies of the 21-page document to give to those who had expressed interest. Mom noted that the population of the Colony was 400, with 112 homes.

As the Sun's First Rays

(Dad's Journal 1 pp. 90-99 — 9 Dec. 1981)

The big, well-built Indian touched the fine, combustible wood sticks with his long fire-burning stick. The exposed particles around the funeral pyre quickly ignited and rapidly rising tongues of flame soon reached upward. Within a minute the well-arranged logs were burning furiously forcing those of us who were near to retreat in a widening circle. The morning sun was just appearing through broken clouds on the horizon of South Mountain.

This spectacle was the final culmination of three days of Indian activity following the lingering death of 64-year-old Carroll Redbird. He had died almost exactly three days before. Indian custom demands that the deceased be properly taken care of within that time. It is believed, by many that the spirit will wait no longer before it would then come back and haunt the living. So final rites were scheduled for sunrise at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday, Jan 10, 1981.

On Thursday morning I received a phone call from Pres. Farrell.

He asked, "Bro. Davis, will you be our speaker at the funeral of Bro. Redbird?"

I hesitated and then said, "Well, yes if you ask. Who else will be on the program?"

"We'll have two music numbers and I'll give a short account of his life."

"You mean I'm to be the sole speaker?" I exclaimed.

'Yes, we'll only plan on a half-hour or so." With that he terminated our discussion and I was left wondering what to do and say.

As I pondered on the matter I more and more realized that I was dealing with a very unfamiliar situation.

I spoke to Thelma about it and she indicated that prayer, fasting, and soul-searching would be needed. So, we decided to fast until after the church funeral service, which would commence at 4:00 p.m. on Friday.

I have taken part in hundreds of funerals but this marked my first attempt at an Indian service. Several problems arose, such as: he was not a member of our church; I was dealing with a different way of life and death; I was new in the area; and most of those in attendance would be proud, judging Lamanites.

A search of various scriptures did not fully suffice as material for delivery. However, after praying and fasting, I resolved to rely on words from the Lord to help me. I simply planned a loose arrangement on the Plan of Salvation.

I shelved the matter for the time being. Mom and I cleaned the chapel and arranged seating. Then we made a trip to Gila Crossing to visit the principal of St. John's School. This was a memorable experience and Mom has recorded the details of this in our missionary journal.

We arrived back in time to attend the funeral service. It was conducted similar to any other LDS funeral. I presented my remarks and truthfully I can say that I have seldom felt more confident and inwardly pleased. I patterned my remarks to compliment the Indian culture and therefore, I was able to present church doctrine without offending.

Mom and I have been told that several months are needed to gain the respect of these people. Therefore, we were astounded to learn that we were invited to attend the wake and cremation! These two rituals are regarded as only for Indians. The wake was to be held at the nearby community center in the evening and nighttime hours. It would conclude shortly before the cremation at the cemetery at dawn.

It is customary for everybody attending to bring food of some kind. Thelma asked what we should submit and she was told that eggs or bacon would be accepted. So, about 9:00 p.m. we gathered eggs and bacon into a paper bag. We donned our best clothes, pinned on our badges, and drove to the center. We entered the rear of the building and after remaining for a half-hour in a small anteroom, we joined a large group in the main section. I had previously delivered the food donation. We were graciously accepted into this quiet and solemn crowd.

The open casket with its lone occupant was resting on a support at the front of the large room. In one corner, near the body, a large pile of blankets was resting on a table. These were accompanied by several western hats, shoes, many yards of cloth, various men's clothing needs and many other items of use.

A note of explanation is necessary at this point to explain the presence of the growing pile of new gifts. It is firmly believed by the Maricopa Indians that gift articles which are burned at the cremation are sent on to be accepted and used by the currently deceased and also by close relatives who have previously died. So this pile of gifts grew and grew as various donors added to the collection. Eventually, the blankets had to be arranged in three separate piles.

It was interesting to note that there were about two hundred adult Indians in the building. This number represented about two-thirds of the entire Maricopa tribe. However, a few of those present were Pima, Cocopa and Yavapai. Many of the Maricopa tribe were in attendance at the wake but only a small number of these were at the funeral held in the branch meeting-

house. This indicates that these people are much more receptive to their own traditions than the white man's religious concepts.

We had been invited to enter the main room through the courtesy of an elderly lady. We sat in the midst of several natives near the back of the room. We were facing west and toward the open casket.

We remained seated in this area for perhaps twenty minutes during which time hardly a sound was heard. Then, very quietly, an older man arose and walked to the front where he looked upon the inmate of the casket. He stood thus for a short time then turned and faced the members of the audience. He then, very slowly, retold the general history of the deceased man's life as it was associated with his own. This was a low-key, but articulate resume with occasional pauses. He did not tell of any negative aspects of the dead man, but instead, told of common experiences of childhood, going to school, some travel, various work episodes and his general goodness. Little was mentioned of his family or conditions incidental to it. He then wished the surviving relatives well and then slowly returned to his seat.

Another long pause ensued during which nothing was said. Only occasional movement was noted as some few in the audience came and went. Various articles were added to the growing pile of gifts.

Then, in very much the same way as the old gentleman before, another older man arose and did the same as the first. He spoke very generally about his association with the deceased. He added, however, that he was glad that the tribe was attempting to preserve the old ways by holding a wake and cremation. This last speaker was a Mr. Cameron whom I have met personally and learned to respect. Incidentally, Mr. Cameron is a member of the Assembly of God Church.

Some minutes after Mr. Cameron returned to his seat, the rest of the audience remained very quiet. Presently, a tall middle-aged man approached the casket, peered in, and then broke into a sobbing chant. He was soon joined by several others, both men and women. Soon a ritualistic utterance was heard and proved to be coming from a short, graying older man in the center of the group. He spoke in Indian dialect and was accompanied occasionally by several sobs and chants. This evidently was a ceremony conducted by the tribal witch doctor or medicine man. This continued for about thirty minutes during which time several women in the audience grew more voluble in uttering wails and sobs. At the conclusion of the actual ritual, Thelma and I quietly arose and left the building. Several Indians were outside quietly waiting to enter the building and become part of the group, which would remain until morning. During this entire time food and mild drinks would be consumed as part of the worship service.

Mom and I returned to our mobile home and retired for the balance of the night. We set the alarm for 5:00 a.m. and then, with strange thoughts in our minds, we finally fell asleep.

My inbuilt alarm system awakened me before the alarm sounded. I arose and put on my robe and went to the front room. It had previously been arranged that a son of the dead man would come to our place and pick up a shroud at about 5:00 a.m. This article was a long, continuous piece of cloth that Thelma had sewed together until it measured one yard by thirty yards. This was to be used as a final wrap around the cremation mound prior to the burning.

Shortly after 5:00 a.m. the community police car arrived and a tall, well-built man came to the door and took the large paper bag which held the ceremonial shroud.

Thelma and I lay down for a short time after which we arose and decided to go to the Indian cemetery. We found no one there. So, we drove to the community center. We were amazed at the large number of vehicles and people who were there. We may have missed part of a most dynamic affair. People were just beginning to emerge and enter their cars and trucks. We waited a few moments as we watched the sacrifice articles being loaded into pickup trucks, then we joined the others as they drove the mile or so to the cemetery.

Upon arriving I was uncertain where I should stop but, after observing others, I decided to follow several other vehicles, which parked in a rough circle around the ceremony area. We pulled up near some others where we waited to see what was going to happen. In the gloom of night we could see the cremation structure. It was only about fifty yards from our little truck.

While we were observing and wondering, Winona, a church friend of ours, came over and told us the casket would soon be brought in. Presently, we heard the rhythmic beat of hand-held rattles. These were operated by two men who were accompanied by several others as they led the procession onto the cemetery grounds. Winona told us that the body

would be packed forward and then placed upon a blanket. This procedure would be repeated four times as the bearers neared the cremation site. Each time the casket was moved forward the men, shaking the ceremonial rattles, would precede the bearers. Another individual would pick up the blanket and hurry forward to the next resting spot. This continuity took place until the casket was placed near the side of the collection of logs comprising the cremation arrangement.

At this time, Thelma and I joined others in forming a human ring around the central site. Daylight was making everything more visible and we watched with wonderment at what continued to take place.

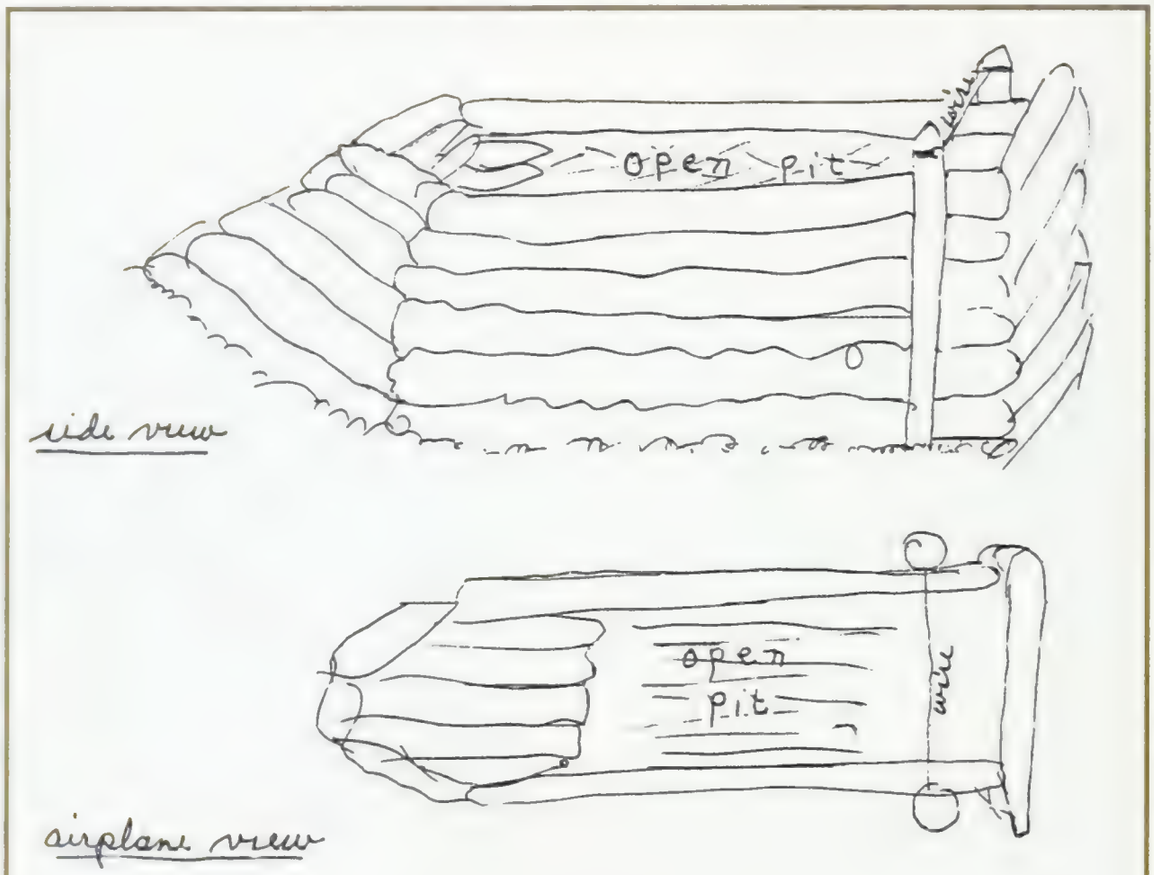
The honor guard, which proceeded the arrival of the casket, stood in a straight line on the eastern end of the ceremonial site. The members swayed from side to side in a very soft, yet positive way as the two men shook the rattles. The chants were rhythmic and quite soft. They seemed to vary some in apparent meaning.

The casket was opened and all were invited to file by and view the remains of the dead man. This privilege was not adhered to immediately which proved typical of these slow, patient people. Finally, some started filing by causing a rising storm of sobs and Indian lamentation. The women readily voiced their grief in loud moaning and crying.

During all this several women and men were slowly but steadily covering the pyre with the gift sacrifices. This was done very carefully as each item was fully unfolded and placed in meticulous fashion on the logs. Thelma and I estimated that their contributions numbered thus: forty to fifty blankets, six western-type hats, several pair of shoes, many items of cloth apparel, two suitcases, one pair of crutches, yards and yards of cloth, sixty to seventy scarves, one jacket, several shirts, several ties, two walking canes, and other items not identified. [These were things to be sent on with the spirit of the dead person. Not only things that person will need, but gifts for many others of the family's dead!]

During the adornment process the honor group, shaking the rattles and chanting, continued a non-stop tribute. The dancing performed by it was exact and deliberate. The chanting started with a faint, shake-shake-shake of the rattles. This would continue for two or three minutes during which time it would reach a moderate crescendo then slowly recede in sound until it was barely heard. Then it would be repeated again. This was a pleasing and hauntingly beautiful rendition of sound and movement.

The cremation altar was first covered with the many blankets, then one by one the other articles were added. The "covering" ceremony was climaxed by wrapping the whole with the thirty-yard cloth. A final



"It is important that one gains a mental picture of the cremation structure," Dad wrote. *"The logs were a collection of various sizes from three to four inches thick to ten inches thick. These were piled one upon the other to a height of about six feet. The bottom of the structure was also filled with appropriate sizes to fit the room provided. Small, easily-ignited material was placed on the ground and around the entire perimeter. A cavity, similar in shape to a wooden shoe, was left in the top to receive the body. The feet were placed toward the tapered end of the arrangement."*[22]

application involved the placing of dozens of scarves, which had been tied together in a long train, around everything. These beautiful scarves were new ones which had been previously worn at the wake.

The logs of the edifice were no longer visible and the entire affair appeared colorful and soft. The chanting and dancing had continued throughout all this process, which perhaps took thirty to forty minutes. Several women were now wailing as they were being comforted by others.

In the early morning light several cotton harvesters passed along the public road which was nearby. A wild duck could be heard as it squawked somewhere in the dense shrubbery beyond.

The Indians who had been unfolding the blankets and other gear had now retreated into the crowd around. Only the dance group remained. Then, as if by magic, the members began a slow, precise, and meaningful side-step movement in a counter-clockwise fashion around the site. Previously, however, several men had moved to the casket, removed the entire lid structure, carefully enshrouded the fully-clothed body in a blue blanket, and then lifted it up and carried it to the cremation erection. Two men climbed into the central open area and received the body as it was presented to them by four others. Slowly and very carefully the corpse was placed down inside the structure. The legs and feet were thrust into the toe-like opening and the rest of the body was placed in the central, open part. Now, being face up, it was covered with several additional sacrifice articles. The men climbed from the structure and assisted in dismantling the casket. This, along with suitcases, canes, crutches, and anything left over was added to the pile.

The dance group continued its farewell tribute. This was exceedingly slow and very serious. The beat of the rattles subsided several times as the movement would almost completely stop then slowly and deliberately regenerate again.

When the men and women dancers had completed the circle and returned to their exact original starting places they stopped chanting. Silence was supreme for several minutes then occasional wails were heard. This was most noticeable from an older woman in a wheelchair. She had been the deceased man's wife.

The crescendo of wailing grew louder and louder and was marked by occasional yelp-like sounds.

At this point the leader of the cremation procedure announced that breakfast would be served at the community center. Then he slowly walked over to the firestick, picked it up, had another Indian ignite it with a cigarette lighter, and then the big, well-built Indian touched the fine combustible wood with his long fire-burning stick.

Dad's Notes (10 Jan. 1981):

1. It is estimated that only about 300 Maricopa remain. Almost all the adult membership was represented at this impressive rite.

2. Thelma and I drove by the cemetery later in the day. Only a small heap of black ashes remained.

3. It's rumored that a bulldozer is going to make a large excavation which will be used to bury the dead man's possessions. According to custom these will be burned prior to covering with dirt. The sod-type shanty which Carroll Redbird lived in was also burned and nothing remains except the sods which constituted the walls.

Mom's Notes (9 Jan. 1981):

[A few days before the funeral] Wilma [Redbird], with tears streaming down her cheeks, said: "There's much talk of what the family must do as soon as my father-in-law dies: how his things must be disposed of within 3 days or his spirit, which doesn't want to leave anyway, and is clinging here, will come back and keep coming back to his beloved things here. Spirits don't like to leave their things, so we must burn them so they'll be gone, too. And we must move the familiar things around in the house, and do some changing in the yard so his spirit will not want to keep coming back, and things here will seem strange and he'll go away!"

Mom's Notes (10 Jan. 1981):

There are two big-wheel families here — the Redbirds and the Sundusts. So, as in all other cultures, it's pride and money that talk! The proud Redbirds really made a big cremation — 8-10 men working several days to make that pyre. And they're following thru upholding the old, old tradition of demolishing Carroll Redbird's home. Yet our neighbor [who was inconsequential in the community] only took off and had burned the porch where her son was sitting when he died [in a drunken stupor several years ago].

Why the Axe?

(Dad's Journal 3, pp. 110-113 — 2 May, 1981)

Our experiences here are varied and never seem to become dull. The following account will verify what I mean as I will try to relate another chapter of interest regarding the people on this Maricopa Indian Reservation. Actually, this reservation is officially called the Gila River Indian Reservation but our part of it is known as the Maricopa Colony.

Thelma and I were in the local tribal community center. It is a cement and cement block building used as a meeting center for various purposes. Tribal wakes are held here occasionally as are civic meetings, senior citizen gatherings, instructional get-togethers, and school Head Start functions.

She and I were observing how well several preschoolers were being taught and disciplined. This training was taking place in a special room on the south side of the main section. Thelma watched the Indian children as I riveted my gaze on a scene which was apparent as I peered through the large window in the south wall. Several huge Indian men were sitting on an old bed, a box or two, or the edge of an old table. They were motioning and pointing toward the window through which I was observing. They were passing a gallon jug around as each freely drank therefrom.

Eventually, Mom and I left the small room and went into the main section which was connected to the kitchen area. Here, two women were preparing sandwich ingredients for the young people. Some of these boys and girls were seated at a low table where they were grating cheese for a sandwich. I teased one of them a bit and then stood back and, together with Mom, just watched. Our backs were toward the large open area of the room. Then I heard a low voice as it came from behind us.

Addressing Thelma it said, "Could I see you over here?" Thelma turned and then motioned to me to follow. So, I turned with her and took three or four steps toward a large Indian man wearing a checkered shirt and adorned with a bandana around his head. Ignoring me, he faced Thelma and very simply said, "I'm sorry about what I said to you the other night. I shouldn't have said it."

"Oh, that's alright, I understand." she replied.

Then, very positively, he extended a large, thumb-up hand which she grasped and held in typical Indian fashion. Then he turned to me and, without a word, offered the same gesture to me.

I clasped the hand and extended thumb and said, "We appreciate you doing this."

He turned to walk away and I laid my hand on his shoulder in a mark of friendship.

After I dropped my hand I then noticed, as did Thelma also, a large, shining double-bitted axe hanging from the hand which had not been offered in the traditional handshake. He walked across the room, opened the exit door and left.

Mom and I stood aghast as we just then realized whom and what we had been facing. Was the axe there on purpose or was it simply being carried to some other area for use outside?

All this wonderment was amplified by what had taken place the previous Saturday night. It had gone like this:

I was asleep in the bedroom of our mobile home. Thelma was watching the evening news on TV when she heard a subtle knock on the sliding glass door. She arose, drew the curtains, opened the door, and faced a huge Indian. He simply said, "Is your husband at home?"

"Yes, but he is asleep." she replied.

Directly he said, "I want him to take me to the store."

"Why?" she asked.

"I'm an alcoholic and I need liquor."

"I'm sorry, but we can't do that," she quickly and resolutely said.

"Well, why not? Your are here to help people and I need help."

"We are advised to refrain from hauling anybody around, and anyway, we would not assist you in acquiring liquor."

"Well, will you give me two dollars then?"

"No, we won't do that either." she replied.

Whereupon he faced her and said, "I hope you go right down there," and he motioned with a pointing finger as it indicated a route toward the ground. He then turned, walked down the steps, and said again, "Right down there!" His finger was, as before, indicating a "down to hell" indictment.

Then he left into the blackness of the night.

Thelma awakened me, told of the experience and then, somewhat perplexed, sat down. I immediately went outside, searched the yard area and finding no one, returned to the mobile home. We locked the doors and then, without fear, went to bed.

Monday morning disclosed at least seven large Indians as they were gathered together by the little Redbird hut near the community center. They were, as usual on payday, drinking and gambling. This takes place twice each month when these men receive government subsidy payments.

Thelma and I observed their degrading actions as they drank and then openly relieved themselves anywhere near. These men were involved in such when she and I dropped into the community building to observe and visit the children's preschool program. It was there that we were approached by the large Indian with the axe.

Someway, somehow, I hope to reach this man and others and help them regain their dignity and respect.[1]

Handyman

As a welfare services missionary Dad's job was to teach the Indians how to do things for themselves and NOT to do it for them. But their lack of interest in learning how to become self-reliant frustrated him. So he took out some of his nervous energy on small projects and simple repairs at home. Dad was happier when he was actively accomplishing something. Mom wrote:

Today [Versal] rewired and fixed our backdoor outside light which we need very much as it's on the side nearest the [basketball] court. He's [also] fixed up the old vacuum donated by going to a thrift store and finding a good hose to replace the badly frayed one on that vacuum. He has a hard time waiting for Indians to respond so he can teach them. Today he said: "I'll wait until one month before we're to leave, then I'm going to fix everything on this place — Indians or no Indians![25]

"Fixing" tangible things was enjoyable for Dad. He expressed: "I've been constructing some quilting stands for the rest home. It actually seems good to use my hands instead of my mouth."[26]

Mom verified this natural inclination when she wrote: Sometimes the snail's pace of this assignment gets to Versal. And he claims he's just not a proselyter — it's not his thing. He says he'd much rather *do* things than try to teach and reason.[27]

Young people regularly came to use the basketball court behind the church. Sometimes Dad conscripted their help. In this photo **Dad's work crew** was described by Mom: *Late in the afternoon we conned 6-7 Indian basketball players into some raking out between the front fence and the road. They raked and burned the brush out there.*[24]



The Welfare Services Approach

In the spirit of doing "with" and not "for" their new Indian friends, Mom and Dad tried a number of activities in an attempt to help individuals and the community lift themselves to a higher plane of living. These two pages give an idea of the types of endeavors Dad and Mom incorporated to try to encourage new interests among their Indian friends.

Gila River Indian Reservation, A.Z. - Maricopa L.

Event	Success	Remarks 11 Mar 1981 Wed.
Garden	Good	Just started good possibilities
Schools	Too Early	Learned much, in peril
Com Ctr.	Fair	Head Start Ex, other midwives
Dances	Poor	Poor Grade, No interest
Quilts	Fair	Little interest
Welding	Poor	No followup
Sports	Good	But ineffective
Movies	Poor	Confusion - but possibilities
Aerobic dancing	Fair	Little Participation
Dance	Good	Fun loving - for kids
Gospel Teaching	Poor	No audience
Sewing	Poor	No desire or follow thru
Com Float	2 Good	Created good contacts
Car Repair	Poor	No Committments
Missionary Effort	Good	4 fam, good possibilities
Printing	Poor	No construction interest

An assessment chart Dad and Mom created three months into their mission to try to gauge the effectiveness of their various activities.

decided to plan toward at least 1 class (sewing) a week. Will try mumus, quilts, little boy's trousers, little dresses.[28]

MUSIC LESSONS — Mom: [We] trundled over to the church and had the 1st music lesson 'off the top of my head' because the Prados had taken our one-and-only MTC music-teaching book. . . They learned the keyboard.[29]

WELDING — Dad brought his welder from home and had to rent two tanks to run it, at a cost of $300.00. His plan was to teach the Indians auto mechanics, auto body work, or equipment repairs. Despite all of the repairs and work that was begging to be done, the Indian men were noncommittal and only semi-interested in learning how to fix things. Dad also purchased various steel materials for use in creating rough iron art work in an effort to interest the art-savvy Indians. Mom recorded: In our activity night Versal helped our mid-age boys weld valentine hearts of metal — they really got excited about that.[30]

A month later she wrote how Dad fixed himself up a 'shop' in a back room of the church and organized and stored his tools there, then added, Maybe that humble little crowded shop will bring him closer to some of the Indian men. And he did have several come by to seek his advice or get nails and bolts, or borrow a tool.[31]

SEWING — Mom: V and I tested the 4 old, old sewing machines there [at the church]. All have parts missing, but the old Singer treadle one does work. The rest we'll ask to be junked. Good interest and participation from 5 Indian Sisters [at an Activity Night]. We



COMMUNITY FLOAT — Mom and Dad helped the Indians prepare a "Headstart" float for entry in the Mul-chu-tha Pow Wow at a parade in Sacaton on Sat. 31 Jan. 1981. Mom wrote at the beginning of the process: I'll be involved in the costuming, Versal is building the float, but we're trying to follow our instructions of only working with the Indians.[32]

After the float was finished and had won first place for originality in the parade, Mom summarized: All through the planning and construction we only advised and demonstrated when they asked for help. Mostly they needed Versal's construction experience and cleverness. As the dress-making never materialized, I had very little to do with the float, but I surely valued the new friends it brot.[33]

GAMES — Mom: We rigged up a long jump rope to exercise them [activity night youth] and wear them down a bit. But the jump rope proved so popular that it occupied the whole evening, for boys and girls.[34]

AEROBIC DANCING — Though many of the Indian women had expressed interest in aerobics classes (exercise dancing to music taught by the wife of a counselor in the branch presidency), when it came right down to it Mom wrote, I was surprised by the lack of response... although the kids really liked it.[35]

GARDENING — Mom and Dad planted a little garden (for themselves) in mid-January, the appropriate time for temperate Arizona. It measured 20'X30'. Mom wrote: Our garden started and at least one other, [neighbor] Red McMillan.[36]

On another occasion she recorded: *For* [our regular Tuesday] Activity night we were all prepared to teach the W.S. [welfare services] lesson on gardening: garden plot spaded, fertilized, raked, seeds & starts all bot & here, our garden diagram made, compost pit ready to show, but about 2 dozen kids showed up and 2 Indian women!

"And those kids were running wild, so Versal brot our participants in our garden class over there to our trailer. . . . But even here we were disturbed again and again by kids. . . Versal was frustrated.[37]

And on another day she wrote: [Our chain-linked fenced] garden is right out in front so any passerby can hardly miss it. And very often an Indian man walking by, or even driving by will stop and talk to Versal as he works. 90% of the purpose of that garden is to teach these Indians. The other 10% is the marvelous therapy of growing things, and lastly, food for us and to give out some samples.[38]

Finally, Mom recorded: For Act. nite Versal tot a lesson on gardening, using the latest issue of our Church News which is almost totally devoted to gardening, and our own flourishing garden. He took the sisters right into our garden, dug potatoes, carrots, beets with them and we filled sacks for them. What a circus keeping all the curious Indian kids and dogs out of the garden![39]

First Investigators

There was an attendance of 41 at church today! [Branch] Pres. F. [Farrell] was beaming, Mom exulted in her journal, on 25 January, 1981.[1]

Adding fuel to her excitement was the fact that many of the attendees were families they were proselyting: less active Tony Ringlero and his new, non-member bride, Debra; Hansel (Red) McMillan, his wife, Lennidine, and their three young children; and Bobby Kisto, a prominent Cheyenne-Cree-Arapahoe woman who Mom described as a "different breed of cats." With Bobby was her eleven-year-old son, Stanley, also an investigator.

These three families — the Ringleros, the McMillans, and the Kistos — became the main focus of Mom and Dad's efforts in the spring and early summer of 1981. Teaching them was a long, many times disappointing, but often exhilarating process. Mom and Dad were diligent, creative, and prayerful in their proselyting efforts. They grew to love their investigators and the investigators loved them in return!

Tony & Debra Ringlero

Mom — 25 Nov. 1980

We spent a very enjoyable evening with Tony and Debra Ringlero. Young newlyweds as of June, they're living at Gila Crossing near his mother, but planning on going to BYU at least by spring.

Tony said, "I'm Pima and Apache. . . [I] was out on Placement for 7 years. I've been to BYU and lack 40 credits for graduation in Secondary Ed. and Physical Ed." Right now he's working for the Phoenix Union School District apparently as a counselor for Indian Youth. . . As a hobby he's researched and teaches Indian dancing.

Mom — 8 Dec. 1980

After Sac. mtg. Debra, our non-LDS friend, surprised us by asking if we'd come to dinner at their place next Fri. evening. Of course, we accepted and Versal asked if we could bring some ice cream. Debra seemed surprised by that, but pleased, and replied, "Oh yes."

Mom — 12 Dec. 1980

Tony, huge, very dark, very curly-headed and tall, broad, but strangely beautiful Debra were our hosts. Their home is a flat-roofed adobe house. I doubt that many people would even recognize it as inhabited from the outside. Dirt and sagebrush surround it . . . Debra Ringlero is only 20 and a bride of 6 months, but she seems much older to me and she has a calm, lovely dignity. And she is so gracious, of a Navajo father and Apache mother! . . . Debra's dinner was superb: pork chops fixed with onions, baked beans, salad and tortillas, one of the standard Indian breads. She had everything perfectly organized and ready, and though we ate at a tiny table, she served everything buffet-style from a shelf. And she didn't even have a refrigerator! I learned later that she'd planned that dinner especially to our tastes.

Mom — 13 Dec. 1980

Tony is the first Indian Priesthood member to attend Sunday meetings in 4 Sundays.

Mom — 17 Dec. 1980

Debra Ringlero had brought her young sister-in-law to the Christmas pageant. . . . Debra sat with us and Wilma and Winona. As we left the gym, Debra, in her quiet way, said: "I have to take my sister-in-law home, but Tony is over at the Community Center teaching dancing. Would you like to come over there for a while?" So we did — all of us. When Debra came, she said to me: "Would you like to dance with me?" After consulting Versal, I said: "I'd like to, Debra, if we can sometime teach you to waltz and samba." She said, "I'd like that."

Serene, in levis and heavy shoes, Debra got her shawl and carefully draped it around her shoulders. It was a dark blue with long, gold fringe. She apologized that she didn't have a shawl for me. So, side by side we sedately danced around the 4 ki-yi-ing drummers. The step, really a shuffle, is harder than it looks, and the body is very immobile and erect.

Versal joined the men's group and had a harder time for their dance is a little more complicated.

There must have been 20-25 Indians at the Community Center. Their faces are expressionless as they watch us. We stayed about an hour, then thanked Deb and left.

. . . As we arrived home and pulled the plug on the palm trees' lights, a night wind was blowing. Those huge palm fronds sound like big pieces of paper rustling and flapping. Nearby, in a corner of one of the



Mom, Jeanette Redbird, and Tony and Debra Ringlero make rag dolls, 2 Dec. 1980.
Debra (right), who Mom described as [Tony's] *wife-of-the-beautiful-spirit* and very mature for her 20 years was unusually warm, kind and receptive.[40] She was among the 20-25% of her Indian peers who graduated from high school and was submitting her papers to go to BYU and study nursing.

Her LDS husband, Tony, had lived in an LDS home in California for seven years on the Indian Placement Program, had attended BYU, and was planning to return to finish his degree. Mom wrote of him: *"Tony is good tho he gets his priorities confused: Indian music and dancing come first, the Church second.*[41]

church windows, a roadrunner sometimes roosts. Our nights are lovely. Our trailer house is home. We're very happy.

Mom — 28 Dec. 1980

Last Mon. nite we had invited Tony and Debra Ringlero for Sun. dinner today. Debra has a very special spirit and Versal said: "Let's have them come to dinner and we'll ask Tony, as head of their household, if we may teach Debra the gospel." They accepted the dinner invitation.

Yesterday Versal and I fasted and prayed about this, our 1st real proselyting attempt. . . As soon as Versal had said the blessing Debra, in her quiet straightforward way said: "I want to join your church — will you teach me?" Versal and I just looked at each other for a second, then turned to her and told her how we'd love to, how we'd hoped for this.

The McMillans

Mom — 1 Jan 1981

We had a half hour visit with [Red] McMillan. He talked freely and pleasantly of his work as a security guard, mainly keeping the cars of night-shift employees from being stripped. We didn't mention religion only to invite him to come see some films next activity night. He said he would. I'd go a long way before I could find a cleaner kitchen than Lennidine's and her children are flawlessly clean and she's neat. She's a very dark Indian.

Mom — 14 Jan. 1981

Home to prepare for our 1st Discussion with the McMillans. We'd made a 6:30 appointment with them. . . . We gave them the assignment of re-reading the J.S. account in the P of Gr. P, J.S. 2. Red seemed especially pleased to have something to do. He had Raejean get pencil and paper for him and carefully noted the assignment. We've agreed to meet with them Fri. 23 Jan. & probably all subsequent Fridays.

At first Red had been very distantly polite with us, but as we've become acquainted, he's really warmed up to us. And, imitating Versal's spading, etc., he has prepared a garden area, telling Versal: "I'm really watching you and I'm going to learn." And he's raked his weeds and burned them, smoothed and harrowed his big yard and seeded it with rye grass, planted a mulberry tree out front "like those trees of yours." (We didn't even know they're mulberry trees!)

Mom — 22 Jan. 1981

[At their second discussion with the McMillans] Red said: "I've written to my folks in Cleveland, Ohio to tell them we're investigating the Mormon Church." And, at one point Lennidine, our Maricopa investigator, said: "I know, if we are baptized, it will be hard to be among the Indians here."

. . . Red brought us some onion sets tonite, which we'll be happy to use. . . he told us of his hopes to really develop his land with chickens, fruit trees, lawns, garden. And he's not afraid to be different out here.

Mom — 25 Jan. 1981

Our whole McMillan family came [to church] today — all 5 of them. Red was in a beautiful new, buckskin,



The Hansel (Red) McMillan Family. L-R: Delora (2), Hansel (Red) McMillan, Lennidine Yaramata Sundust McMillan, Jacinda (5 months), Rae Jean Sundust, 1 Jan. 1981. Regarding the circumstances of this photo, Mom wrote: *Lynnadine asked about administering to the sick at suppertime last night. Versal explained it to her. Lennidine has a 3½ month old baby girl, a beautiful child, who is still kept in the hospital because of breathing problems. And Lennidine expressed a desire to maybe have it administered to. . . we'd promised to take a family picture for the McMillans when they were permitted to bring their baby home for just 1 day on New Years Day — today. So we went over . . . and Versal took several pictures.*

fringed jacket, Lennidine in a long dress, Raejean (with a short haircut) and the 2 little girls all beautifully dressed. After meeting Red told Versal: "This is good for me and my family. I like it. I need it."

Mom — 30 Jan. 1981

. . . we asked Red and Lennidine if they'd consider baptism before too long. Red said that he would but Lennidine said: "I believe the Church is true, but I feel I need to be better before I join. I'm not good enough."

Since missionaries 1st contacted them 3 years ago, and taught them one or two discussions, they've quit drinking, thus had to give up most of their friends. They quit smoking. They've bought a home (trailer house) and are very clean and neat. They are good parents. They are respected in this community.

Mom — 4 Mar. 1981

Lennidine brought her 2 little ones and walked over, ostensibly to borrow our hairclippers . . . but stayed all morning — unusual! And she finally, quietly said, "Red's gone." We were astounded, and I guess we looked it. . . . She hesitated. We waited. "But we had a big argument last night. We both got pretty mad and he left."

Mom — 22 Mar. 1981

Red and 'Dean' had had an argument about her oldest son (his stepson), Timothy, a troubled teen, who lives with Lennidine's sister-in-law nearby. Lennidine wanted to have Timothy live with them; Red didn't! Red left home mad and returned three weeks later.

Mom — 17 May 1981

This has been a special day. Versal gave the last lesson to the McMillans — 'After Baptism What?' Of course all the branch presidency attended our class and they are so pleased and touched by the prospect of

— at least — having one male Indian joining the Church that Brother Hutchison, Br. Prado, and Pres. Farrell all bore fervent testimonies. . . . With tears in his eyes Bro. Hutchison bore his testimony and promised the McMillans that, though they might be scoffed at and even persecuted a bit, they'd never regret their decision [to be baptized] — if they remained faithful.

However, I doubt that Lennidine of the gay laugh and serious Sioux Red will be hurt by the community. Gay Lennidine is a leader — *the* leader — of the Redbirds now. She's had to fight her way up from the depths of drink and an attempted suicide. When she found she was pregnant with Delora she poured kerosene on herself and set herself afire (drunk!). Her oldest 2 children had been taken from her. But when 2 young Mormon missionaries taught them some 3 years ago, Red and Lennidine felt the Spirit and began to change.

Bobby Kisto

Mom — 25 Jan. 1981

After dinner . . . we gave the' Joseph Smith Discussion' and 'Apostasy In All the World'. These film strips & records made especially for Indians are good. . But after the films, Bobby Kisto began with: 'Why did you have us kneel down to pray?! That's degrading to an Indian to kneel! Does God want us to feel degraded? Indians stand up and reach toward heaven to pray.'"

"Our unexpectedly vocal ally was Tony[Ringlero]! He testified with sincerity of his being asked to be a medicine man here because of his knowledge of Indian singing and dancing and community involvement. But, he concluded: 'I just can't accept that great honor among my people as I know about the true church and as I feel it's true in here," and he put his hand over his heart.

"Bobby Kisto watched Tony intently. . . And Tony went on to explain that traditional Indian houses face east, for the haunting tradition of the great white God coming in great power from that direction has seeped down to them. And the Hopi council is always composed of 12 men & a leader.

"Bobby Kisto accepted a Bk of M & agreed to read it prayerfully however she prays"

Indian Superstition

(Dad's Journal, 1 April 1981)

This white owl flew into the tent and perched at the head of my younger sister's bed. Mother became hysterical and cried. My dad promptly proceeded to construct a casket," Bobby said in a firm voice.

"But, Bobby, surely this meant nothing," Thelma replied.

"Well, it did mean something and, in fact, the owl returned two more times."

"Was your sister ill?" I asked.

"No, not at all, but she died very suddenly just a few days after the owl appeared."

This conversation was the result of our visiting Bobby Kisto and trying to present a missionary discussion. She is white-appearing, but yet is, as she says, a full-blooded Indian. Her bloodlines are Shawnee, Arapaho, and Cheyenne. She is very proud of her native heritage. She is a well-educated, very honest, and forthright individual. She is a heavy woman about 45 years old.

She lives in Circles, Arizona in a government housing project. She has a husband whom I've never seen. He reportedly is a free-wheeling, immoral man and is seldom home.

Bobby is a student counselor for Indian girls who are affiliated with the Phoenix school system. She does a tremendous amount of counseling for other people, boys and girls, on a free basis. She also admits many of these into her home where they stay until opportunity comes to go elsewhere.

Mom and I have been meeting with Bobby and some associates for some time now. I've learned to respect her though I certainly do not approve of her harboring the incredulous ideas such as represented above. But, never-the-less, she is a very honest and outspoken woman.

She has told us many things about her early life which reflect the traditions, training, and lifestyle of the real Indian culture. A few of her very honest assertions are:

1. She can tell when someone dies in the community because the dogs of the area will bark and howl and range in a clockwise fashion around the community. At the same time coyotes will do the same but range in counter clockwise manner.

2. She claims that her mother can and has called poisonous snakes from the interior of hunes.

3. Owls, as indicated in the story, are sure messengers of tragedy and death.

4. Common cockroaches are pure protein and are a good source of emergency food.

5. Many plants which are abundant here are sources of food. (This I believe to some extent)

6. She stated that baptism is a must for her because she feels that without it she will be cast into everlasting hell. (This one we've got to work with and convince her this must be, but not because of fear.)

7. Cremations and burials should take place before dawn so the owls, as escorts, can take the departed spirit to the great white spirit.

8. Medicine men, to be effective, must observe strict rules such as: no tea, coffee, alcohol, cannot be evil, preferably live alone, and cannot receive pay for service.

Mom and I are intrigued with this very genuine individual. To change her reasoning on superstition is going to be a challenge. We expect to meet with her on a regular basis, after which, hopefully, we can usher her into a more realistic and spiritual aspect on life. She, then can be baptized and, I'm sure, become a very strong and influential member of our church.[1]

Tarantulas!!

(Dad's Journal, May 27, 1981)

Tarantulas! At home, the name used to strike terror in the hearts of many. But here in Arizona — well, they are regarded as just another form of wildlife.

I have found three tarantula holes right here around the mobile home. These residence sanctuaries are similar to a small gopher hole. The opening is finely-laced with spider silk which traps insects. These become food for the patient trapper, which rests about six inches below the hole opening. I have seen these huge spiders several times but I do not fear them and I will not permit anyone to molest them.

Even the rattlesnakes, roadrunners, various lizards, huge beetles, etc. are safer here. I simply do not wish to destroy any of them. There are literally hundreds of small cottontail rabbits here. And, one has to be careful when driving to prevent running over the

abundant quail. These (quail) are always found in coveys of five or six birds. There are lots of wild morning doves here also.

Medicine men

(Mom's mission journal II, 28 April 1981)

Medicine Men! Every Indian we work with finally comes around to this subject. In our baptismal interview session last night with Debra (and Tony) Ringlero, this surfaced unexpectedly.

[Debra mentioned her sister who she said "was into peyote now" and continued] . . . there's now a medicine man over at Ft. McDowell who's holding peyote meetings. It's a lot like church where the medicine man gets the bad out of you. But it's scary. I went to one just once when I was in high school. You sit in a hogan in a circle and the medicine man sings and chants and chants. And you get so the bad things you've done just start coming out — you try to stop talking but you can't. It's weird. I'd been drinking some before that time, but I got so scared that night that I never drank again. You daresn't go out of the hogan for there are evil spirits all around the outside. You can feel they're out there. And the medicine man already knows all the bad things you've done — he knows. But he makes you talk about them!"

. . . Big dark Tony sat quietly and listened. But I remembered that he's told both us and Pres. Farrell that he's been asked to be a medicine man here, but has refused. We're so grateful for his time spent at B.Y.U. and that he and his Debra are preparing to go back together to the Y. in June.

No Indian men here we know have yet whipped the terrible evil peer pressure here — but Tony [Ringlero] and Red [McMillan].[44]

Mom recorded another insight regarding Shamanism, this time with information from Wilma Redbird, the branch's sole active member:

As she taught our Spiritual Living lesson in Relief Society, very emotionally Wilma Redbird volunteered, "Sometimes I take my children to the medicine man. I know better, but I try to please my mother-in-law." . . . Then Wilma, with tears streaming down her cheeks said: "You don't know how hard it is here for an L.D.S. Indian! There's so much superstition and their beliefs are so different from ours. I'm trying hard to hold on to my faith, but everyone around me belittles me."

Joyous Baptisms

Mom — 23 May 1981

Baptism Day — at 4:30 p.m. — If no one backs out!

And no one did, but from 9:30-4:00 Dad scrambled to help Tony Ringlero replace the starting motor in his car in order to make it to the Phoenix Stake Center for the baptism. On arrival there, Mom wrote that she braided Debra's long hair so it wouldn't float up and Versal, with careful deliberation, baptized our 4 Indians.

The following day all four converts asked to have Versal confirm them in our Sacrament Meeting. He did. Rae Jean and Lennidene cried silently as they were confirmed. After the confirmations Pres. Farrell also gave little Jacinda a name and blessing at Red and Lennidine's request — Jacinda Janel McMillan.

Mom — 24 May 1981

. . . . After the confirmations and blessings Pres. Farrell called on the 4 to speak. And they did, beginning with tall, slim, serious Hensel (Red) McMillan, then short Lennidine, Rae jean who hesitated often and rolled her eyes as she carefully thought, but she didn't break down and cry. . . Last of all was quiet, shy Debra who humbly thanked us, too.

Then Pres. F. Called on Versal, but Versal "pulled senior companion rank" and had me bear my testimony. And I'm so thrilled to have at last, 2 complete families in our Branch! For a couple of weeks, as Tony and Debra leave for BYU on June 15.

Mom — 10 June 1981

Lennidine explained how her friends and relatives thot, now that she'd become religious, that they could come freely to use her shower or laundry facilities because she's "good" to everyone, or supposed to be.

Mom labeled this photo as **Our 4 Baptisms.** They are: Debra Ringlero, age 20 (wife of member Tony Ringlero); Lennidine Yaramata Sundust McMillan, age 32; Hensel (Red) McMillan, age 48; and Rae Jean Sundust (age 9), Lennidine's daughter (Red's step daughter), Phoenix Stake Center, 23 May 1981. Red is holding his and Lennidine's two-year-old daughter, Delora.

Bobby Kisto, Mom and Dad's other prime investigator at this point in their mission, eventually lost interest. Her adamant adherence to old Indian superstitions kept her from moving to a higher level of understanding.



Gaining Acceptance

Mom's friendliness and Dad's easy-going playfulness gained them many friends among the Indians. Dad treated their children as he did his own grandkids, with fun-loving mischievousness.

Soon after their arrival, Dad was given the job of tending seven Indian youngsters, while Mom taught their mothers how to sew. She recorded: Versal fared better thru that session better than I'd hoped. He sang with the kids, recorded their voices, then played them [the recordings] back much to their delight. He took pictures. He chased and teased and tickled.[46]

But the trust Mom and Dad eventually developed with their Indian acquaintances was a long time coming. In a 28 May 1981 letter to Deb, who was working for LaVel in Texas at the time, Mom described how difficult it was for Indians to warm up to whites:

Right now I can hear old, crippled, black Dynamite in the shade under our trailer, flopping his tail on the ground. He'd welcome and love you. And long, lean greyhound Greyeyes, who is carrying one foreleg carefully (dog-fights, I guess) would just overwhelm you though he can't come bounding in long graceful leaps right now.

And our Indian friends would shake hands and say hello, then look away silently polite. To look at a person, especially a stranger very much is impolite. Though they talk and laugh and joke with and around us, it's taken months to achieve this. So when we bring strangers among them, they withdraw. As Randy [Ruiz] says: "You'll never know how hard it is to meet strange whites."

Thus we'll probably never be able to share our new friends with our family! They wouldn't share — they'd freeze. But we're enjoying them more and more.

Your Dad's zany antics delight them. Sometimes he'll get out his pocketknife and chase a little kid around demanding: "I get some of that hair! You've got too much and I haven't got any!" And the kid will shriek and run and laugh and edge right back up to him as soon as he quits. They'll stand and rub and pat the hair on his arms, then look at his head puzzled. And we play volleyball with the older "kids" — in their 20's — and they feel free to laugh at our goofs, but accept our suggestions. They're always polite to me.[47]

Bald Eagle & Cotton Top

Once during dinner banter with friends Tony and Debra Ringlero, Mom said, "the conversation had gone from why Versal had little hair on his head (he is still hunting for a bald Indian) but can grow lots on his face, while Tony has a heavy, heavy mass of wavy black hair, but a wispy beard; to the fact that Indians also do not have hair on their chests, or body or arms and legs. We laughingly told them we were the ones reverting back to aborigines because our sons are all quite hairy — all 5 of them."[48]

While teaching Richard and Lisa Martinez, a young married couple, one evening, Dad fielded yet another question about his lack of hair. Mom described the light-hearted encounter:

Wacky Lisa stopped Dad right in the middle of the serious discussion and said: "May I ask you something that isn't on the lesson? And please don't get mad, but did you used to have hair on your head? Well, how did you lose it?"

Of course, Versal told Lisa that I pulled it out — some every time I got mad at him. She thoroughly enjoys banter.[49]



Mom and Dad's Native American friends on the reservation affectionally called Dad **"Bald Eagle" and** Mom **"Cotton Top,"** photo 7 April 1981.



In this photo **Mom is shown writing at a desk in their mobile home on the reservation.** In addition to letter writing, she recorded extensive daily entries in three blue mission binders.

Dad, too, wrote copious journal entries. He also worked extensively on recording family histories: John Gould Davis (his father), Charles Augustus Davis (his grandfather), and brief accounts of his eight siblings. Mom noted once, while he was working on one of them, *"Versal is completing a fabulous history and gets quite caught-up in the fun of remembering*[51]

Photo, December 1980.

String of Burglaries!

"How lovely, cool, innocently the days here dawn, but how they heat-up with sun and the turn-of-events," Mom wrote in her journal on 28 May 1981.[50]

Mom had no way of knowing when she wrote this passage how eerily her words presaged an ominous drastic "turn of events" for their mission, one that would take place that very evening. The euphoria of their first baptisms five days earlier was about to be shattered by the first in a shocking string of burglaries. The thefts shook their confidence in their safety, their faith in the justice system, and colored their view of the Indian community. The burglaries also initiated undulating waves of fear, anger and cynicism during their lows to empathy, determination, and faith in the highs. But most markedly the lawlessness catalyzed the focus of their mission and made their proselyting efforts more targeted and intense.

Burglary No. 1

Dad — 28 May 1981.

After having entered through the main sliding door, we stepped into the kitchen. I glanced ahead of me and said, "Mom, did we leave that folding chair on the floor like that?"

"Well, no, I don't believe so," she replied.

Then looking around more, we both exclaimed, "Oh, no!!"

The screen, covering the south kitchen window, was cut down both sides and across the bottom. Someone had intruded into our residence!!

Thelma peered around the living room and remarked, "I knew it. Our stereo set is gone."

A quick investigation disclosed this to be true — one large speaker was missing, also.

We immediately searched for further theft. Upon entering the bedroom we noticed one suitcase resting on the floor. One cabinet drawer was open and one piece of hosiery was lying on the floor. I glanced around, supposing nothing else had been bothered, and then, instinctively, I looked up to the top shelf in the clothing closet. I kept a 22 caliber pistol there. It was gone!!

Thelma and I left everything as it was. We contacted local authorities and then awaited results. In about an hour an Indian officer investigated and took notes.

At 7:00 p.m., earlier in the evening, Thelma and I had driven to the Pee Posh Community Center to attend a graduation ceremony for several of the Head Start pupils. It had been a well attended, well organized, and rewarding experience. We had taken some party food as part of our contribution. We had visited with various people and prior to returning home we had assisted in cleaning the large entertainment room.



Mom and Dad were attending this **Head Start Program at the Pee Posh Community Center** on the evening of 28 May 1981, while Indian teenagers burglarized their trailer house nearby.

During the awards part of the program, Thelma and I had been presented a plaque honoring us for our help in assisting the organization build an award-winning float. We were surprised, humbled, and pleased to receive the honor.

It, indeed, was ironic that we were being honored at this place and, at the same time, our mobile home was being burglarized.

I hope this episode is not indicative of things to come!"

Unfortunately for Mom and Dad, it was a harbinger of future events! As for this first robbery, they discovered that four young men, 14-18 years old, had their stereo equipment, gun, and other things. Although the police were informed, nothing was resolved.

Mom — 1 June 1981

This morning, realizing how vulnerable we are here — aliens — we decided to get all personal valuables out of here. We collected our loved things and stashed them on shelves in the church closets that are so high up that we only accidentally discovered them. Mainly we stored our genealogy material, our personal (completed) journals and histories, tapes, etc

Dad — 1 June 1981

I don't fear the people of this area but I believe in being prepared. So I have instructed John to send a revolver. This I will keep near at all times — in our mobile home and the little Toyota truck also. I don't anticipate having to use it but I will, if absolutely necessary.

Dad — 5 June 1981

I have developed a dull headache in thinking about the theft which took place a week ago. . . The big problem is [that] I, by nature, feel militant and want quick action, yet, we are here as church emissaries and are not supposed to invoke or promote trouble. So, what do I do? Thelma and I have talked the matter over and reasoned that I must forget "getting even" with anyone who offends us. Sincerely, this is difficult to do. But, I know I must hold my anger and frustration in check. Instead, we will observe and use any opportunity we can to help these simple, unknowing people. Even if those we try to teach are ones who have personally offended us.

Near-Witnesses to a Murder

Mom — 6 June 1981

Speaking of burglaries: after we had our tires mounted we drove on into Phoenix, stopped at a public library opposite a shopping plaza. It was 9:55 a.m. and we had to wait until the doors opened at 10. There were 6 of us standing there. We'd only been in the library 5-10 minutes when we heard a battery of sirens and 6 police cars roar up into the Plaza and surrounded the liquor store — it was the end store directly across the street from our library. All the library patrons stood at the windows and watched policemen with drawn guns run all around the liquor store. A fire truck pulled up; 2 ambulances arrived. It was just like on TV.

Then a 12 yr. old boy who'd waited out front with us said quietly: "I saw some people run down that alley over there just as we got in the library." So we sent him over to talk to the police. When we left, the area around the liquor store was roped off, one policeman was still questioning the lad, the ambulances had left empty.

We drove to Pres. Farrell's and stashed 3 suitcases of clothes and a box of tools in his basement. At least life stays interesting. We were home by 2 P.M. Over in the church I practiced [piano] and Versal worked on his journal.

Curious, at 10 P.M. we watched the local TV news. The burglary we'd "seen" near the library was also a murder! The clerk had been shot in the head. The 12 yr. old boy was the only witness to any part of it. He'd seen 4 men run down the alley.

Burglary No. 2

Dad — 8 June 1981

Well, it happened again! Sometime Saturday night, while Mom and I were in the mobile home, my gas welding outfit was stolen from the church shop. The rented tanks were also taken. Access was by prying the door lock until entrance was made.

The tanks were on a rental basis and I was required to pay $350.00 deposit to obtain them. This amount, plus the value of the welding apparatus, comes to at least $500.00. In the two breakins I have sustained a financial loss of more than $1200.

Mom — 8 June 1981

We slept fitfully. Several times Versal slipped out to



Of the dog, **Dynamite,** Dad wrote: *The neighbor's dog, Ole Dynamite, has been staying in our yard. He is a big, raw-boned, black animal and a fair watch dog. We, of course, lock our gates at night and the dog is therefore confined within. We feel better when "Ole Diny" is near. For the first time since we had Coaly in Logan we bought some dog food.*[53]

patrol the premises. Did I say slipped out? The creaking and squeaking of this long tin box, which we'd chuckled about for months, now became ominous. How could Versal surprise an intruder on the inside or outside! The new outside-lights-on policy illumined areas, but blackened others. All a prowler need do is duck under the trailer house and he could tell by sound exactly where we were, but he'd be well hidden. Dogs and Indian kids are often under there to hide, to play, to retrieve balls, and twice for kids to try to start fires as they play with matches, a constant phobia among Indians, big and little.

Dad — 11 June 1981

Our condition here on the reservation is tense. We are faced with protecting ourselves by installing burglar alarms, removing all unnecessary possessions, and procuring another handgun.

It seems silly that missionaries should have to do this but such is the case.

Mom — 11 June 1981

More and more I can understand why the Indians cluster their houses together in a Clan unit — there's safety in numbers of loved ones nearby!

Except for the faithful McMillans, we feel quite "alone" out here. So, to eliminate some of the vulnerability of the area under our trailer house, Versal and I went out at dusk, cut and gathered all the catsclaw branches we could find on our back lot and mined the under-trailer area with it. At least people won't crawl under there now!

Emergency "Council of War"

Mom — 13 June 1981

During this time period Mom and Dad learned of many other reservation burglaries and acts of vandalism, intimidation, beatings, and attempted murder. Reports of lawlessness seemed to come out of the woodwork: twelve other recent robberies within the Indian colony, three burglaries against welfare services missionaries on nearby reservations, and stories of break-ins along entire streets of homes. Most disturbing, however, were horrendous accounts from people like Stanley Janis, a bitter, old Indian who told how three 91st Street hoodlums "had broken into his home one night, beat up on him and his blind wife in bed, throwing her on the floor and stripping her. Then they'd ransacked the house, stealing his guns and many things, loading them in his camper and escaping with it."[54]

Mom and Dad's heightened concern prompted a two hour "emergency council-of-war" with Phoenix Stake President Kent E. Turley, a young civil lawyer. From that meeting the following decisions were made:

1. We should move mostly [away from welfare services and] into proselyting to get a Branch core [of members]. Our tools are gone anyway!

2. When the danger seemed too great, or our nerves were too frayed, we should go into the Farrell's at nights [10 miles distant in Phoenix].

3. We were to interview Jim Cole [an Indian who had been burglarized three times].

4. Pres. Turley would use his influence to set up an interview with the U.S. Attorney and we were to take a couple of Indians (Janis for one [an elderly Indian who had been robbed, his wife stripped, and his home burned]) who had serious complaints. No state laws apply to Reservations, and, of course, our losses are invalidated; use Indians!

5. We should let Pres. Turley know if we found the Branch to be a hopeless dead-end!

6. Pres. Turley immediately had the trailer house insured!

So we stayed overnite at gracious Farrells; they have extra bedrooms (they're like us now, family all gone).

Taut Nerves

Mom — 25 June 1981

We have a new affliction. We were awakened by a pelting of hard objects against our long tin box. Sometimes it was accompanied by a scratchy sound. It was most prevalent by our back door. Versal jumped up flashlight in hand and warily peered out. Myriads of huge, flying beetles were zooming around the back light, some hitting the tin siding, some bouncing off, some slithering madly down it.

Dynamite's baying woke us once. He stood facing north for a while, then relaxed and lay down. So did we.

Mom — 28 June 1981

(Written after another night at the Farrell's.)

"Versal awoke at 5:30 to the singing of the many birds in the orchards and huge palms around the almost-hidden Farrell home. Immediately he awoke me with a whispered, "C'mon let's go home." So we quickly dressed, made the bed, grabbed our cases (Versal carries one everywhere we go, which contains his cameras, his gun, a flashlight), and proceeded to slip out. Along Baseline Road the 10+ miles home.

Versal was edgy — this going in to Farrell's needles him — it's a kind of escapism, a running. Anyway he silently crawled into our bed.

Frustration with Law Enforcement

Mom — 24 June 1981

After weeks of phone calls and visits to the Sheriff's Office, FBI offices in both Phoenix and Sacaton, the Drug Administration, and to other authorities, where all they got was the run-around, Mom wrote in exasperation:

So, our great law enforcement system does not apply to Indians. Certainly not here. These step-children of the good old USA, these original landowners, are aliens in a foreign land, of fear, of gangs and drink and dope. This Colony is being destroyed, from within and from without.

Dad — 1 July 1981

I telephoned the F.B.I. last Monday and learned that little help can be expected from that source. It is very disappointing to realize that protection or investigation by <u>any</u> authority is almost non-existent. These people here are vulnerable and I feel so sorry for them.

. . . Every time we converse with some teaching prospects we learn of more and more breakins and thefts. Residents are becoming very nervous. There are reports of evident murders, which have been committed but never solved. . . Dope and narcotics are evident here. This I reported to the Federal Agency on

Drugs, and again, I was given the "brush off" regarding any action.

Empathy & Recommitment

Mom — 1 July 1981

We're resting much better here at nites again. I don't know whether it's because of the locked gates, or the presence of gruff old Dynamite under our bedroom window, or the catsclaw strewn under the trailer house (tho we keep throwing pieces of it back under as the dogs keep trying to get rid of it under there), or the fact that Laveen and Gila Crossing are the present targets for the gang, or because our minds are more and more preoccupied as we line up more families to teach, or the presence of a gun and a vial of mace. Certainly there isn't any assurance in the law out here! Only in a higher law!

The staying brings empathy — of us for the Indians [who are also victims of the Indian gangs] and the Indians for us. And more and more families are agreeing to hear our message.

Dad — 1 July 1981

Mom and I feel that we must contact and teach family situations here. We feel this will be the best way to bring order into the lives of these troubled and fractured people. We are depending upon the Lord for guidance and protection. We regret the loss of our personal belongings plus several hundred dollars in forfeitures, but our biggest concern is our assigned effectiveness here. We pray, that after our 18 months, we leave this area in better spiritual strength than we arrived.

Higher Authority

Mom— 21 June 1981

Red had been hired as a security guard at Pee Posh for the wake last Fri. nite. He said our 91st gang was there drinking and howling and gleefully evading the police who were trying to send them home. We didn't go to that wake and I'm glad.

Robberies and gangs have got to be brushed aside somehow. Somehow we've got to make a desperate effort to bring the light and hope of the gospel into some of the good families here. After our legal let-downs, we've decided to go to a higher authority. I got out our journal entry on [Logan Stake] Pres. McAllister's setting-apart blessing on Versal and me. He'd prayed that

- we'd be safe thru out our mission.
- our family would be safe.
- Duane would complete a successful mission.
- the Spirit of the Lord would guide us.

We stayed and slept in our barren trailer house tonite.

Burglary No. 3

Mom — 10 Sept. 1981

Taking advantage of Mom and Dad's absence while they were in Phoenix for Dad's hemorrhoid surgery, thieves once again burglarized their mobile home back on the reservation. The new branch president discovered the break-in but waited to notify Mom and Dad until he was released from the hospital and recuperating at the Farrell's home. When Joyce Bartlett, the wife of newly installed President Lester Bartlett, finally called Mom, who recorded their conversation in her journal. Sister Bartlett said: "Your trailer house was broken into Tues. nite or Wed. during the day, for when we arrived for Act. nite Wed. night the back door was wide open, the night lights were off and a side front window had been pried open so forcibly that the frame is all bent and the glass half broken out. . . We don't know what was taken."

Mom — 11 Sept. 1981

After a night's rest, Mom and Dad returned to the trailer house to assess the situation.

We'd feared the worst, knowing these youthful vandals often ravage houses," Mom recorded. "But the only things missing were our old TV (from D.I.), the 2nd stereo speaker (which had been bypassed in the 1st burglary) and ice cream from our fridge. Curiously, the windows in the front room had all been opened, Sis. Bartlett had reported. Open windows and ice cream! A leisurely party?

Speaking Up

In an early-July journal entry Mom wrote: Versal has decided it's time for us to speak up at the wakes where all local denominations take part. Of course, we'll be the only whites.[56]

They decided to become more active in all local affairs for they sensed an urgency in moving the proselyting along. Dad began speaking up in community meetings and wakes, often causing a stir. In his journal entry dated 7 July 1981 he recorded:

Mom and I went to another wake held last Sunday night. We entered the Community Center about 8 P.M. and stayed until midnight. During the time we were there I took the opportunity to speak to the large audience. This action proved to be an interesting experience. . . I, apparently, rocked some boats as I created a lot of commotion among the other church groups which were present.[57]

In her account of this all-night wake, the 13th since they had moved to the reservation but the first they had actively participated in, Mom discussed the four hours they attended (from 8:30 until after midnight). She described the American-flag draped casket, the pile of items to be buried with the corpse, the off-key singing of the Gila Crossing ladies' Presbyterian chorus, the discourse of a gentle Pima Indian reverend, and the regulation "saved" sermon of a guitar-playing Assembly of God preacher.

Then she wrote: Meantime Versal had talked to Randy [Ruiz, an investigator], to old Nick Sunn, and to Perry Sundust, the master of ceremonies, telling them the Mormons would like to participate.

The Indians are very democratic as we've recorded earlier — everyone has a chance to say his piece. But I think Perry Sundust was kind of flustered. However, he announced, as soon as the Gila Crossing women finally sat down, that the local Mormon Elder would like to talk. He couldn't remember his name, but he could talk now.



A grave in the Gila Indian Reservation Cemetery, July 1981.

Mom observed: *The whole graveyard is a striking area of dirt mounds topped by plastic flowers and some American flags. The Indians used to put lovely pottery, hand-woven baskets, etc. on the graves; but not any more as the whites steal them.*[62] And in another entry she commented: *It takes 6-8 Indians 2-3 days to dig a grave. The soil is cement-clay-like. They use handwork only.*[63]

Versal had several advantages: we'd fasted and prayed about this opportunity for we know that we either win or lose this Branch in the next few months. Versal has a strong testimony, a strong voice, good delivery and he isn't shy. He introduced himself and then using Brother Koori [the deceased man] as an example, Versal started with the brother-sister concept of pre-existence and really laid out the Plan of Salvation from start to possible Godhood. He explained both our Father's and our Brother's roles in the great plan. He concluded with his testimony of only one right church led by a modern prophet. Versal didn't mince words. No one could help but hear him.[58]

According to Mom's record, Dad's oration prompted an older woman from the Gila Crossing Presbyterian Church choir to step forward, with a Bible in her hands and loudly and often emotionally let us have both barrels.[59] In her journal Mom carefully itemized the distraught woman's lengthy arguments and concluded her account by saying. Then she prayed, asking that the dear family who is such a strength in their church be not misled and blinded by false teachings etc. So — the news is finally out that we're teaching the Ruiz and Sundust family! She quit at 12 midnite and we left.[60]

New convert and friend Lennidine McMillan, who was at the wake, came over to visit with Mom and Dad the next day. She was worried they'd taken offense by the animated oration of the woman choir member. Mom said they laughed and when Lennidine saw they weren't mad, she seemed relieved and told them, The Indians got real uncomfortable and kept moving in their seats when you were talking. They didn't go to sleep.[61]

Lennidine also told them about another local robbery by the 91st Street gang, this time at the home of an Assembly of God minister who lived in a compound that also contained an Indian orphanage.

Making a Difference

The credibility and acceptance Mom and Dad had established over many months paid off at another Indian function on 21 Sept. 1981. Mom wrote:

Versal decided he felt well enough that we should go [to a community meeting at Pee Posh] and we were glad we did for it turned out to be the community questioning law enforcement heads. . . We really learned a lot! And Versal's leadership shown thru.[64]

Reports of 20 recent robberies in the community were given — including Dad telling of their own string of burglaries — then the session seemed to stall as no solutions were proposed, no actions forthcoming. Mom recounted:

Versal, with real conviction, spoke again. He said: "I'm not pleading for myself, but for you. You've got to live here and you've got to whip this lawlessness. The police can't do it alone. You know who's committing the crimes, yet you sit silently. Some of you even buy your neighbors' stolen goods. You're as bad as the thieves — you're helping them. And soon it'll go to killings. Yet if you'll work together you have the power to stop these juveniles. If you don't, you deserve what you're suffering and what will happen! Our Church sent us here to help you. That's our sole purpose in being here. And if we can help you establish law and order here and eliminate the fear you're all living with, we don't mind what we've lost!"

There were nods of approval and Cameron spoke on forgetting old feuds and animosities and working together. Then Ron Navakuku spoke saying Elder Davis is right. As drugs and their evils increase here with these juveniles, things will get worse and worse. He added that there are 2 drug pushers operating here now (we'd only known of 1).

Then the group began to question the 2 law officers and for 2 hours there was excellent exchange.

Mom wrote that by the end of the meeting constructive, safety actions were proposed, discussed and authorized. The actions included: a silent witness program, a block watch program, "Operation Identification," a community drug education program, periodic reports by the police to the community (to hold them accountable), and a tightening of safety rules and hiring of a new security guard at Pee Posh (the community center).[65]

A New Focus

After Mom and Dad's first two robberies, President Turley's counsel to change their mission's emphasis from welfare services to proselytizing lit a fire under Elder and Sister Davis. (See 13 June entry, p. 304.)

As expressed in her journal, Mom continued to be nervous about their safety but her back was stiffened by the challenge of confronting the evils of theft, drinking, and immorality head-on — not through sewing classes, gardening instruction, or aerobic fitness groups, but by teaching the life changing principles inherent in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the fearlessness Dad exhibited in the Sept. 21 community meeting on crime and his forthright preaching at the all-night wake was equaled by his direct confrontation with the heads of clans — the patriarchs and matriarchs of Indian family groups — regarding their responsibilities to lead out in changing themselves and their families for the good of all.

Mom and Dad knew that baptizing families — whole families — would be the single, best way for the Indians to improve their earthly existence and provide them hope for the life to come.

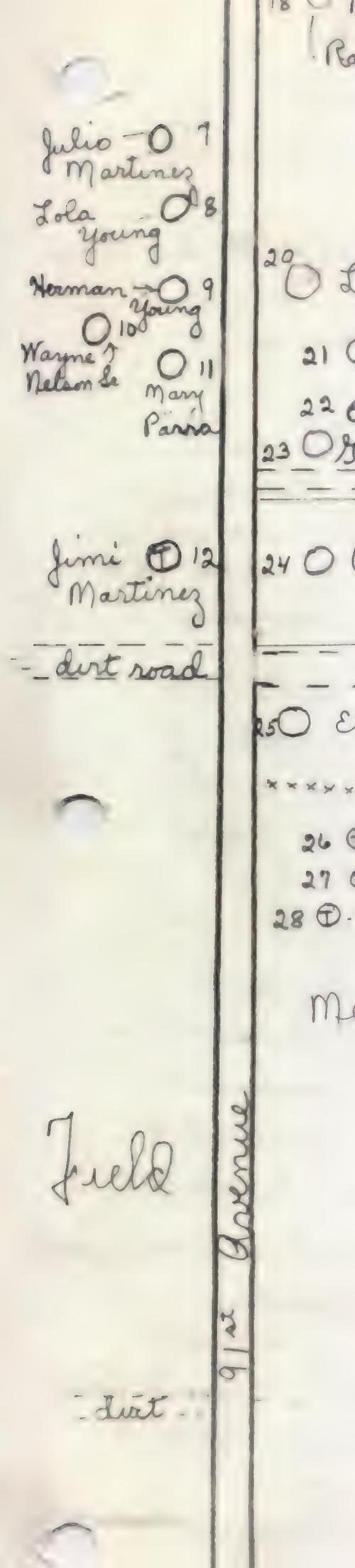
So using the map and census information they had been gathering for months, Mom and Dad identified the targets of their proselyting efforts and charged ahead. Three clans were foremost: the Lola Young Clan, the cluster of families on 91st Street, which included the most hardcore of the youthful vandals; the Malinda Card Clan, Malinda being the matriarach smack dab in the middle of the Redbird Pit bunch (all related); and the Sundust Clan, the most prominent and powerful family group in the colony but riddled with personal problems.

The Lola Young Clan

Mom — 18 June 1981

I'd be a most ungrateful daughter if I did not record the emotions of this day. We 2 had decided a fast was imperative in our nerve-taught, negative situation. We really need the reinforcement offered by fasting.

This morning we awoke at Farrell's at 5 A.M. to the interesting singing of a mockingbird. We dressed quietly, slipped out and drove home.



[Then, after writing of their discovery of a key jammed into the lock of the church's front door, Mom recorded:] But we put this puzzle aside in favor of a bigger attempt we'd decided to make. Because our mapping had revealed 5 intact families in the Lola Young Clan, we were going to go to Lola, the matriarch, tell her of our missionary calling and ask to at least meet once with us and her family. Her grandsons are the 91st St. gang. [Indian insiders had told Mom and Dad the 91st Street Gang was responsible for their second burglary, as well as lawlessness towards many other individuals and businesses.] Our studies show they're not from divorced homes, but are from Indian-Mexican homes. We really felt humble and queasy as we drove all dressed up as missionaries even with badges, to Lola Young's compound. Would she let us in — or even talk to us?

83-year-old Lola Young not only let us in to her 2-room, fairly neat home, but she knew all about us and visited freely with us. [Then after a lot of chit chat] we finally talked about her problem grandsons a little bit and then we asked to give her families discussions. We bore our fervent testimonies of how the Gospel could change lives and families. She agreed and made a date for Sun. evening at 7 P.M.

As so, we're asking for a miracle — that the Lord will soften the hearts of these hoodlums, and their parents, and that he will inspire and protect us.

Mom — 21 June 1981

This evening, with fear and trembling, we loaded our projector and gear to keep our 7 P.M. appointment with the Lola Young Clan. But this time Lola did not invite us in, said her family was at a dinner and dance at St. Johns, that there were too many mosquitoes for evening meetings (They're gone now!), and that her family is busy — we got the brush-off!

The Melinda Card Clan

Mom — 24 June 1981

Versal is ending-out our spring garden now. Our water pressure is so low it's hard to keep it watered and everything has ripened. So today he picked all of the squash (hubbard, zucchini, white), cucumbers, jalapeno peppers, and dug the onions. Cantalope, too. We assembled sacks of the produce and sallied forth:

To Malinda Card's at the Redbird Pit. . . Out popped Evone (6), then Valberta. We proffered a big hubbard and a sack of vegetables and asked to see Malinda herself. Out on the shady side of the house an Indian man was sitting on an old bed, getting dressed there amid washers, clothes, rubble. His back was turned toward us and he stayed that way.

Soon Malinda emerged. . . We flatly told her we wanted to teach her family. We specified her husband, Howard, her son Darrell Thomas, her granddaughter Fay and husband. Indianlike, she stood with averted eyes. The man at the side of the house was obviously listening intently. Malinda said: "All right." We countered with, "Tomorrow? Over in our cool church?" She said, "Yes. At 1 P.M."

Mom — 25 June 1981

And, lo and behold, Malinda and her husband Howard Card did come! We were delighted, for Lennidine has assured us this is the only way we'll reach that Clan. Howard, who'd sat out on the bed listening yesterday, never even turning his head, came.

Mom — 9 July 1981

We had a 1 P.M. discussion appointment at the church with Howard and Malinda Card. They'd cancelled last week, but asked to come today. We were all set up: screen, projectors, tape deck, lesson. And we waited and waited. Disgustedly Versal flopped his mat on the cool floor and slept a little while. Then we talked of other contacts we now need to make.

Mom — 18 July 1981

Our time here is slipping away and we need so desperately to bring in some more families. Even the one we've baptized is wobbling [the Red & Lennidine McMillans of the Redbird Pit clan] with some kind of family fight — Red's still gone! Currently we have 7 families whom we're working with — all but one in the early discussions.

Mom — 20 July 1981

After the terrified 9-year-old daughter of their cherished, newly baptized neighbors Red and Lennidine McMillan incoherently roused Mom and Dad from sleep at 3:30 a.m. in the pre-dawn darkness one morning, Mom said, "We both yanked our clothes on, grabbed our defense satchel, and hurried over to the McMillans."

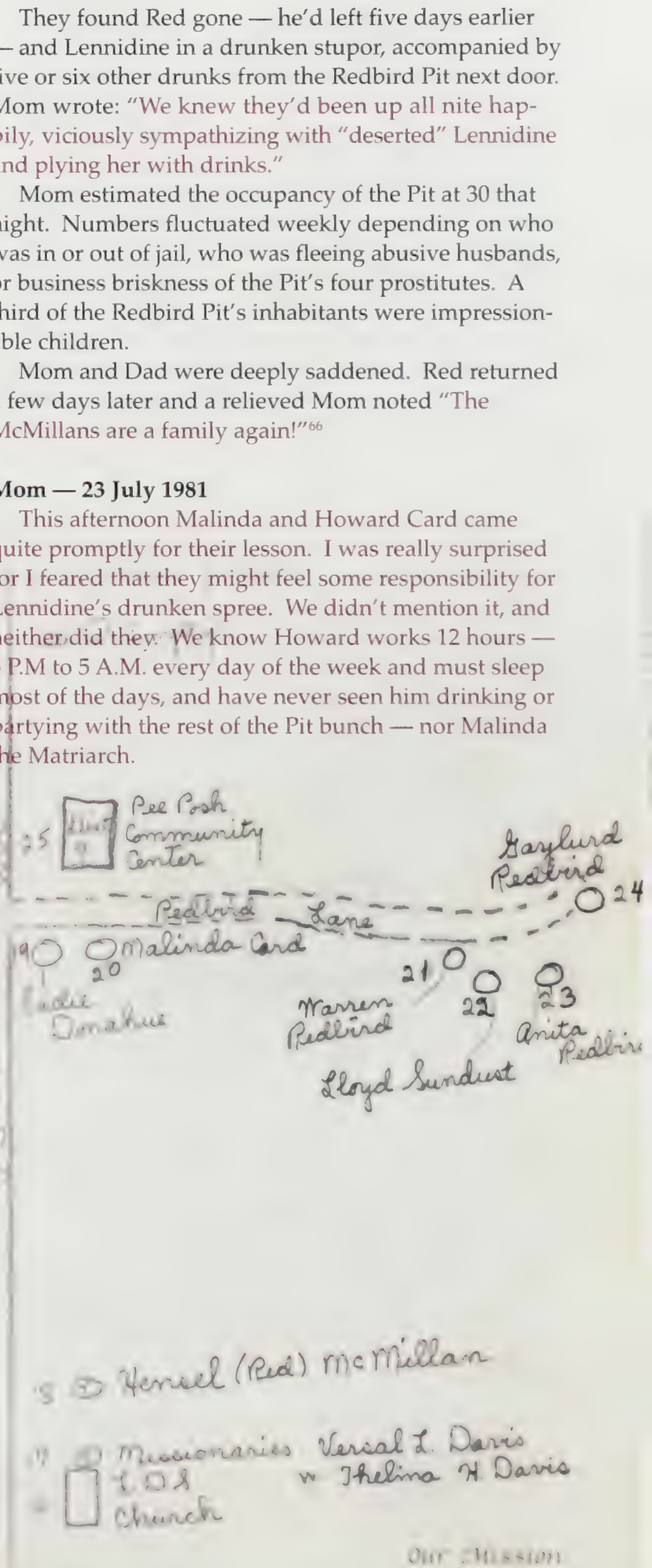
They found Red gone — he'd left five days earlier — and Lennidine in a drunken stupor, accompanied by five or six other drunks from the Redbird Pit next door. Mom wrote: "We knew they'd been up all nite happily, viciously sympathizing with "deserted" Lennidine and plying her with drinks."

Mom estimated the occupancy of the Pit at 30 that night. Numbers fluctuated weekly depending on who was in or out of jail, who was fleeing abusive husbands, or business briskness of the Pit's four prostitutes. A third of the Redbird Pit's inhabitants were impressionable children.

Mom and Dad were deeply saddened. Red returned a few days later and a relieved Mom noted "The McMillans are a family again!"[66]

Mom — 23 July 1981

This afternoon Malinda and Howard Card came quite promptly for their lesson. I was really surprised for I feared that they might feel some responsibility for Lennidine's drunken spree. We didn't mention it, and neither did they. We know Howard works 12 hours — 5 P.M to 5 A.M. every day of the week and must sleep most of the days, and have never seen him drinking or partying with the rest of the Pit bunch — nor Malinda the Matriarch.



Mom — 24 July 1981

And a few days later: Since their big fracas they've (Red and Lennidine) stayed out of sight. I know Lennidine feels guilty and remorseful for she'd told me several times: "I'm so afraid I'll fall back into drinking sometime when I'm angry or feeling bad." And not only did she fall, but her Redbird Clan cousins gleefully pushed her!

Mom — 31 July 1981

[Red has told us several times] Malinda is the key person — the recognized matriarch in the Redbird Clan. She's the most important person." So we finally got through to Howard and Malinda and are teaching them — but our converts, the McMillans [who live right next door] fall back into the drinking booby-trap!

Mom — 5 August 1981

[After a discussion regarding "Truth vs. Error"] We challenged Howard for baptism. He softly said that he knew we are teaching him truths. Now he will pray about baptism. . . We felt the Spirit strongly in this meeting!

Mom — 29 Oct. 1981

We met this evening with Howard and Malinda Redbird Card again. We'd decided earlier that we'd give a resume of the lessons thus far and challenge Howard for baptism. Maybe we've waited too long to do this. Howard always shy and silent, is even more reticent lately and we feel he's coming just because of Malinda's prodding.

So Versal effectively summarized the gospel doctrines thus far and asked Howard point-blank on each one. Always staring at the floor, Howard kept shaking his head negatively. Malinda kept trying to prompt Howard, to correct him.

Finally, Versal told them that we could no longer meet with them for discussions — not until Howard would agree to at least pray for help. Howard never looked up. Even as they left Malinda was protesting that they still wanted to meet with us; but Howard didn't and we knew it. We assured Malinda that for now she could and should attend Church with Lennidine and set a proper example for Howard and her children and grandchildren.

The Sundust Clan

Mom— 24 July 1981

On to 91st. Ave, and just past the 91st Cholow (gang) Den we drove into Imogene's. That Sundust Clan cluster of houses (4) is home for the political leadership of Dist. 7: Perry Sundust, the tall stern cowboy Indian who is the tribal council representative (and aspiring to run for a state legislative office!); Outspoken Ray Sundust, vice-chairman of Dist. 7 (Pee Posh) community council; Imogene Sundust and her daughter Theresa Monahan, both teachers in the all-Indian Presby. Church and committee officials of Maricopa Colony. 2 very Indian, very good daughters of God. Theresa is Head Start teacher and superb.

The Sundust Cluster is all-Indian: caliche mud houses, horses, hay, weeds, some litter, assorted cars in several conditions of repair.

Mom—5 Mar. 1981

Mom described her first encounter with Imogene Sundust, matriarch of the Sundust Clan, at a laundromat months before the burglary crisis:

There weren't many customers. But fortunately, almost miraculously, Sis. Monohan-Sundust was there, alone. And we two visited and visited. (Versal hauls the clothes in, gets our quarters, etc. then sits in the little pickup out front writing or reading while I do our washing among Spanish-speaking Mexicans, negroes, Indians and some whites — all women.)

Imogene Sundust is a lady I greatly admire. A devout Presby. she is indeed a clan matriarch of the Sundusts. She lives on 91st Ave in a typical Maricopa pocket, surrounded by her brothers and families.

. . . In loyal Indian fashion Imogene takes in all the sad derelicts of Sundust wreckages [nieces and nephews working out personal problems]. . . In spite of Imogene Sundust's selfless Clan loyalty, that style of life is far from satisfactory. Nothing will ever replace the Lord's family unit plan. And one woman can't do and be everything to so many.

Over the months Mom and Dad had developed a friendship with Imogene and had taught her several discussions, but now they resolved to quicken the pace and involve more of her family members. When proselyting became their entire focus, they renewed their efforts with the Sundust Clan.

Mom — 10 July 1981

Tonight we loaded up and drove to 91st Avenue . . . to Imogene Sundusts. She'd gone to Phoenix, run out of gas; her son Carson had gone to her rescue. Finally, however, the 4 of them were assembled (Imogene, Theresa, Annabelle and Timothy) and we had a good discussion on Apostasy in All the World and The 1st Vision. We've been months trying to get these 4 together for this message. This is the 1st time that Annabelle has stayed! We challenged them to pray about this knowledge they'd received. Imogene said, "You've told me so many things I've never heard before!"

But they agreed to have us come back next Fri. nite. . . The Sundust Clan —they're the political leaders here as well as the Presby. Ch. mainstays. The Redbirds really don't wield much power here tho they think they're the aristocrats of the Colony. But all of the Clans are in great decay, and the Mexicans, one by one, creep in, much as they are hated by the Indians.

Mom — 21 Oct. 1981

Theresa Mohahan talked to me about their concern for Timothy Sundust (Lennidine's son) who lives with them — he hates high school, is moody, despondent, and they fear suicide. He's a loner. . . . Theresa agreed that we should resume our discussions with them [after a many week lull] and thus try the help of the Gospel.

Mom and Dad continued teaching Imogene and Timothy Sundust until their sudden departure from the mission after Dad's diagnosis of prostate cancer in late November.

Hitting Bottom

Mom— 28 July 1981

Our old branch is bouncing right back on 0 again."

Dad — 20 July 1981

Despite increasing numbers of investigators which Mom and Dad diligently stirred up through daily, persistent, bold contacting, the future of the little Maricopa Branch looked dim. Dad was discouraged, too. He recorded on their"hump day," the halfway point in their mission:

The last section of our mission has started off in even worse shape than when we came here in November. The only active members, Wilma [Redbird] and Winona [Cameron], have become very sad examples in our midst. Wilma is living openly in polygamy and is expecting a new baby. Winona, divorced and with three children, is expecting an illegitimate child also. The McMillan family, which we converted and baptized, is evidently breaking up. [This was written while Red had temporarily disappeared.] . . . I'm sure that prospects look at the branch's batting record and then back off."

Dad also expressed frustration at how often their teaching appointments fell through because of "supposed other commitments."

Dad — 23 June, 1981

Our missionary effectiveness has dropped to virtually zero. The heat, gang-style breakins, and reticence [of the Indians] have stopped almost everything.

Thelma and I have decided to expand our efforts here and actually contact separate residences. Frankly, I'm not very optimistic, but it is our last resort. We have decided to remain here at nights regardless of the potential danger. I'm not sure, though, how long our nerves will stand up under the extreme tension. Thelma is especially uptight but I admire her will to keep trying.

If the rest of the world is similar to the Phoenix area, especially the reservation, then I'm sure mankind is headed toward critical times.

On the plus side, I have received gifts, letters, and phone calls from most of the kids. When I see the family breakdown here among these Indians, I observe my own family. I then feel so proud and grateful for



Mom and Dad's trailer house, their trusty Toyota (which LaVel gave to them in payment for work Dad did for him in Texas), and the LDS church house (at left). Mom and Dad retreated to the church house when the heat became unbearable in their trailer; an example of such is the following in Mom's journal, 5 July 1981:

We spent the afternoon at the church. We have 2 foam rubber mats we lay on the cool floor, and, after a wakeful night, and to keep the drinking party out of view, we rested and wrote and discussed our approaching ——ing.

what Mom and I have. We eagerly await the mail delivery every day and the letters we receive from our kids are the ones we treasure most. I certainly know how Duane must also watch for the mailman.

I'm appreciative to Lauris for handling my financial affairs in Logan. He and Dorth are expecting a new papoose about Christmas time. Mom and I are glad. Jackie told us that she also was that-away. In September she will deliver. Mom and I are pleased about this also.

Mom — 9 July 1981

Versal sometimes has a hard time keeping himself "up" here now. He says sometimes he actually feels caged since his tools are gone, his shop nullified, the weather is so exceedingly hot that it's like a furnace blast to open the door, his garden is gone now — he'll plant again in Sept. He can't escape to his beloved mountains or lakes. Sometimes the scenes out our front door are revolting. So we escape into the cool little green church which is well insulated from outside sounds and heat and sights. The windows are opaque glass and heavily draped. There we study and write and do more and more teaching. And I'm especially gratified at his quick bounce-back and loving apologies when he gets a little negative. This mission has really enhanced our marriage and togetherness.

Mom — 29 July 1981

We are now teaching 7 families, but we'll be even more cautious about these troubled people. And there's no one here to fellowship any converts, but us. . . . We just keep teaching and praying and hoping for miracles.

The Maricopa Twig

(Mom's Mission Journal III, Sept. 13, 1981)

At our Maricopa Branch Conference today there were a full representation of Phoenix Stake Auxiliary officers and Pres. Kent Turley and Counselor Terry South. All Branch officers and teachers were there in our freshly scrubbed little chapel. Exactly 1 Indian lady — Wilma Redbird — and her 4 kids were there (plus her husband's polygamous wife's daughter) — 5 Indians. But we carried forth as bravely as we could.

In opening exercises of Primary ½ hr. late as Wilma arrived shoeless, stockingless, and with dripping hair and had to finish dressing in the ladies' room. While we waited her 5 kids escaped outside and Sis. Ferrin had quite a chase. . . After the Sac. Mtg. there was correlation meeting where all officers and teachers bore their testimonies. When Versal and I talked, we told how very different work is in a little Twig (again today Pres. Turley called this a Twig) like ours. That the concern was not the full Church programs, but people, very simple people, very uneducated people, very needy people. And we pleaded with the stake to realize that our needs are special.



Phoenix Stake President Kent E. Turley, Sept. 1981.

Pres. Turley, speaking last, assured us that our Twig has their full support; that the Lord doesn't send his servants to fail, but to learn and serve and grow; that he, Pres. T. feels sure this Twig will grow to a Branch and not too far down the road."[69]

At stake conference a few weeks later, President Turley called for a stake-wide fast for the Indians of the Maricopa Branch, for as Mom noted, "only by a miracle will the branch be saved."[70]

Confronting the Gang

Mom— 15 Aug. 1981

This evening Versal, still in pain and very angry over the news which Lennidine had quietly told me a day or 2 ago: that the Mack Gang has his welder, are trying (but unable) to sell it, demanded that I go with him to personally confront the Mack brothers. I refused. It took the evening for us to reach agreements on these 2 big problems. Our decisions:

1. For Versal to use aspirins to dull the pain and hopefully lessen the inflammation of his arthritis.

2. As to the Macks ("Mormons"! and ex-placement fellows!), we'll go to see them for 3 reasons — when Versal's not angry: a. to ask for Versal's mechanics book that Robin Mack borrowed; b. to treat them as human beings, children of Israel. To put them and their welfare paramount. They're 4 boys of L.D.S. parentage orphaned 14 years ago and raised by grandparents (non-L.D.S.). Yes, they have a feared reputation here but they're just youths, 14-20; and, c. to be honest with them.

Mom — 17 Aug. 1981

Versal and I knelt in prayer, then drove over to 78th Ave., to the Mack mud-walled home at 10 A.M. We found Robin and Joey Mack at home, in fact, in bed. Robin came out first. Versal asked for his big car-repair book Robin borrowed months ago. Robin brot it out and apologized for not returning it. He said, "I read and studied it a lot as I tried to work on my car. It helped a lot. Then I'd kept it so long I was afraid you'd be angry, so I didn't return it."

When quiet Joey joined Robin, Versal told them that we'd heard that they took our welders and equipment. Like most Indians they didn't answer immediately, so Versal continued, telling them that:

- We want to deal directly with them; no police.
- They can't sell the tanks because he has the receipt.
- He also has all the tips and attachments that fit the welder, making it versatile and really useful.
- If they'll restore the tanks and welder, he'll produce the tips and equipment have the tanks filled, and teach them how to <u>really</u> use a welder.

Of course, they both denied any knowledge or guilt.

Then we turned to Joey and said: "How come you kids all came several times a week to play basketball until the welder was stolen? Then you all disappeared and haven't been back since? Not once!"

Joey walked into the house. Robin stayed out and visited with us quite a while.

Nothing was resolved regarding the stolen welder despite Mom and Dad's Christian attempt to give the Mack boys a way out. But BRAVO for their gutsy attempt!

One of the Mack boys and another Indian had robbed and severely beaten a Mexican farm worker a few days earlier, and was among a carload of Indians who accosted his employer, saying, "We're getting rid of all Mexicans and whites on our land!"[71]

Mom — 22 Nov. 1981

We drove on over to 78th where we chatted with Robin, Valerie, and Joey Mack (who came out to the pickup, of course) and invited them to our trailer house for Thanksgiving dinner. They seem pleased and promptly accepted.

Mom — 25 Nov. 1981 (Thanksgiving)

Robin and "wife" Valerie Stokes, Joey, and Eric arrived just at dusk. Derrick, whom we've never met, was absent. We didn't ask why, but presume he's in jail or prison again. We had all the cooking done, but hadn't set the table as we weren't too sure they'd even come. But they did!

Valerie, obviously pregnant now, hardly said a dozen words, but the 3 brothers visited freely with us. Their parents were Mormons and all boys were baptized at 8. 15-yr. old Eric said: "Our mother died when I was 7, but I was baptized a year later." The non-L.D.S. Grandmother Mary must have honored her dead daughter's wishes!

. . . So now we have further plans for the Mack Gang! We're going to invite them over again with some assignments, hoping to involve them:

1. In deciding on what recreation and work programs they'd like here next summer — grassroots input!

2. And to help us with the roadshow in April — our grand finale! Because Robin has worked roadshows before.

I don't think anyone out here has ever listened to those 4 orphans. Just feared and hated them.

But Mom and Dad's plans for the Mack Gang became moot as Dad's personal well being soon demanded they focus their efforts on themselves rather than others.

Living in a Furnace!

Dad — 23 June, 1981

Hot, Hot, Hot — 115 degrees. The heat is terrible! I can't understand how permanent residents endure such temperatures. As for me, I sweat profusely and feel clammy wet all the time. Even at night the temperature remains near 100 degrees. The evaporative cooler helps but it is only partially effective in the extreme heat.

The garden is declining now. Some of the produce has done well, other has not. The drowth [drought] and heat have been hard to cope with. The pressure in the water system has dropped a great deal and therefore watering the garden is difficult.

Mom — 25 June 1981

Our temperatures are well over 110 degrees most days and, in our trailer house only the hallway and adjacent portion of the kitchen cool to about the 90's now. So we're planning to work mostly over at the church which has an excellent air conditioner.

Mom — 27 June, 1981

Red says the monsoons have arrived. But they're not rains — they're furnace-blast winds and boiling clouds of dust.

Dad — 7 July 1981

When Mom & I applied for our mission call we intimated to Bishop Norton that we would prefer an area with a cool climate. When he sent the forms to Salt Lake he inserted a note which stated that we "liked Alaska."

Well, I'm not complaining but I don't believe there is a place in the whole world that is consistently hotter than here. Temperatures have ranged from 105 to 117 degrees for several weeks. To me this is extreme and I sweat profusely even using slight effort such as walking slowly. . . . I'm a cooler weather man and I much, much prefer the mountains, lakes, rivers, streams, and forests of northern areas! I'm not homesick, as such, but Utah and Idaho certainly have the natural wonders which I prefer. However, 2 more months will, surely, bring some relief from the oppressive heat.

Mom — 25 July 1981

Red McMillan told us, "Well, I lost 10 of my chickens. They just plain choked to death in the heat (110 degrees plus). I sure hate losing them. It's too bad."

The **Pee Posh "Ditch-pool"** as described by Mom: *Notice the swimwear. No swim suits, just clothes. A contrast to string bikinis for whites. Red was here telling us that he won't let his family swim at the Pee Posh ditch-pool as 2-3 yrs. ago he and Lennidine swam there and got a bad rash which required several trips to the doctor to clear up. We'd thot because it has just freshly pumped, free-flowing water that the pool would be OK. But the intense heat causes algae to form so rapidly, so many Indians use the pool, and no chlorine is added. Red bot a little plastic pool for his family. His last year's pool blew far away over the fields in a dust storm.*





Dad and Manuel Prado, the Mexican 2nd Counselor in the Maricopa L.D.S. Indian Branch Presidency, on the Gila River Indian Reservation, Arizona, Sunday, 9 Aug. 1981. Mom wrote of this photo: *"Manuel Prado really likes Versal. He said, "See! I'm wearing suspenders just like you. Can we take a picture?"*[3] At the time this photo was taken Dad was beginning to experience worrisome health problems, which worsened dramatically over the next few months.

Racial Tensions

Mom — 25 Jan. 1981

Our Mexican Prados are not well accepted here — the Indian kids flatly refuse to play with the 4 Prado children, gentle children. The Indians avoid the Mexicans, but the Redbird kids will hit the Prado kids. These Indians are clannish. They're instinctively afraid of the whites, disdainful of the Mexicans.

Mom — 12 July 1981

On a blistering hot Sunday in July, when the other two men in the branch presidency were out of town, Manuel Prado conducted the meetings. Mom recorded:

And Bro. Prado took charge without a flaw. He'd make such a good Br. Pres or bishop in a Mexican ward where he'd be respected! Out here he's looked down on by the whites and hated by the Indians! And he's so faithful and has a wonderful testimony and is so willing. I like and admire Manuel Prado. He even phoned Wilma [Redbird] to see if he should pick up her family like all the whites have done (foolishly!) for years. But she proudly, arrogantly said: "We'll walk!"

Mom — 29 July 1981

Among the families we're presently teaching there will be some in-built problems. For example, the Richard Martinez family are already outcast Mexicans! It's wild! Whites are condescending to Mexicans, Indians, negroes about on a par. But the Mexicans are dirt to Indians.

Mom — 23 Sept. 1981

The Lord certainly knows what he's doing! We've developed into a safe, sane, self-righteous, smug constituency, so superior to all other peoples! And now the great leveling is starting and we've got to come down probably as far as the other cultures have got to come up: in material wealth, in compassionate acts and understanding, in just plain love!

Initial Health Problems

Mom — 31 July 1981

In addition to our other problems we have a most humbling one: Versal just doesn't feel well at all. [This is the first mention of what was to become Dad's ongoing health troubles]: 1. weakness and profuse sweating, 2. increasing numbness in his fingers, especially on his right hand, 3. his old sciatic nerve problem in his lower back, causing his left leg to ache, especially in the thigh, and especially at night, and, 4. stomach cramps, which moved from right front to right back.

Mom — 10 Sept. 1981

Whatever weird ailment Versal has suffered with over the past 2 months has culminated in a minor operation at Good Samaritan Hospital yesterday. 2 huge hemorrhoids and a smaller one were removed. One of the hemorrhoids was external and had ruptured, bled profusely, then refilled on Wed. morning. Dr. Wood examined it and asked for an immediate operation, "lest we get into further trouble. These are forming rapidly and violently."

For us, there will always be 2 causes of Versal's 2 months of misery. Medical technology has found him to be in perfect bodily condition aside from his arthritis. So his troubles were caused by:

1. The record-shattering heat. The only other times in his life he's ever had hemorrhoids were in his youth when he was working in the hay in hot (85 degree-plus) dry Idaho summer sun. Then the affliction was minor.

2. Nerves. His strong will and fearlessness demanded an unflinching stance with the gangs here and with the weak-willed, incompetent police. And his frustration and disgust with the impotence of the FBI, the Indian police, the Drug officers, and especially the submissive Indian populace as they're robbed and vandalized again and again by local, wild, youthful gangs!

His will is as strong as ever but his nerves, triggered by heat, revolted, showing the stress in constant pain, and finally hemorrhoids so massive that they required immediate surgery.

Versal sagely observed as they prepped him for his surgery: "I always thot that the mind had control over the body, but I'm having to admit that nerves sometimes must have a power separate and apart."

Mom — 14 Sept. 1981

After a good night's sleep Versal was quite pert and restless, so we drove to Phoenix to the Bartletts to pick up a little TV [to replace the one that was stolen] that we can just box up and haul with us. (They have at least 2 other TVs.) Then we got a good supply of groceries at Smittys. But time drags now for Versal and he's often miserable.

Mom — 15 Sept. 1981

At some hours of the day he's in excruciating pain. In the mornings he's fairly comfortable and is gaining strength. . . . Tonight, on the little TV, we watched a documentary on the Hopi Indians. It was good, factual If Versal lies down on the couch or bed, he's not in as much pain.

Mom — 23 Sept. 1981

It rained — it actually rained in the nite! It required hours of distant lightning and thunder to finally work the clouds out over the desert! And today the skies are heavily overcast, but not rain-kind-here.

And Versal got up feeling chipper, but had a spell of diarrhea! And his old stomach-side pain is back full force, so he took pain pills and we got out of here — went to Phoenix to the public library where Versal got a big medical book and books on Indians and Eskimos. He's got to do something to save his sanity and get his mind off his pains. And he's going to study to see if he can find out what's causing his pain.

To Smittys and bot groceries and our weekly treat of a root beer.

Then we stopped by the friendly Farrells as Versal, now with his pains dulled, wanted to just visit. Today he wryly remarked: "I never would have realized how much one needs the companionship of friends of one's own caliber if we hadn't come out here. I've always taken pride in the fact that I really didn't need people. I do dislike crowds. But I'm learning the heartfelt need for family and friends. As we've watched Lennidene's struggle we've empathized as we never could have done a year ago."

Chicken Scratch

Mom — 5 Sept. 1981

Pee Posh Veteran's Day Celebration — a big affair here, and well organized. . . At nite activities at Pee Posh increased. Indians are great all-night partyers, because the nights are the nicest hours. Anyway, about 8:30 we could hear the chicken scratch band tuning up. An accordion player — superb! A base guitar player, a drumsman, all Indian. And could they play! We were again at home, but that music! We just couldn't stay home!

Even Versal was pepped-up by it and said: "Let's go watch for a little while!" Chicken Scratch! I can't really describe the music. I guess a wild, throbbing beat, too fast for a 2-step, so the Indian couples dance a one-step to it. They're very rhythmic and we loved it. At no time did that orchestra play a tune we recognized, but it was fascinating!

Instead of a slick dance floor, they danced on a huge concrete basketball court, outdoors, with cars parked all around. It was impossible to tell how many Indians were there in and among the cars. They brot folding chairs for us and placed us among the elderly. But soon Perry Sundust came to talk to us and ask us to dance. Versal, miserable as he was, had caught the spell of that music and tried to get me to dance, but I feared for his miseries.

However, Versal told Perry we'd be glad to dance. Just then the orchestra started a fast, fast waltz beat and we got up and danced as Versal loves waltzes. Not a single Indian danced when we did! We really felt self-conscious, but we finished the dance and it was all Versal could do. We slipped out into the dark and went home. Next day Wilma brot us word that the Indians were pleased with us.

Three weeks later Mom and Dad were summoned to a Pee Posh Resident Board meeting, the caller saying they needed advice and some help regarding a decision they were trying to make. Mom recorded the situation:

Mom — 28 Sept. 1981

We went. 8 Indians were assembled in the little board room and 3 of those Indians are heavy smokers. As we arrived the Board was considering the request of a Rose _____ to hold a special birthday dance for her daughter at Pee Posh next Sat. nite, open to the public. The discussion on that got quite interesting. We didn't say a word. But I realized more and more and I thot:

"It's strange how things happen! That nite that Perry Sundust asked us to dance, he was doing more than inviting or commanding us — he was testing us. I guess that one dance that an ailing Versal and I danced had wider impact and reverberations than we'd ever imagined! We keep hearing about it. These recreation-starved Indians love their chicken scratches, yet most churches here disapprove of dancing. An untold number of Indians watched us as we danced our solo dance. We're rusty as all get out, the music was a fast Viennese rhythm, we huffed and puffed but managed a few frills. We left as soon as it was over, but most of our dark spectators out in the darkness loved it. If only we dared sponsor dancing! If only the drinking problem weren't so prevalent!

Well, the Resident Board really hassled the approval of this dance. . . Finally 4 board members quietly said "OK" and Rose left triumphant.

Then the Resident Board turned to the business for which they'd summoned Versal: a $6000 estimate and orders for materials to repair and weatherproof 20 senior citizen homes. . . . Versal was asked to oversee the project. We agreed to help.

The upshot of this decision was a time-consuming, energy-sapping, but fruitful project to supervise the repair of fifteen homes occupied by elderly and/or handicapped Indians in District 7 (a political/geographical area on the reservation). Dad individually surveyed the needs of the residents then made plans to replace ten wooden doors, eight aluminum doors, sixteen window screens and thirteen glass windows. He gathered materials to repair roofs, build railings, replace water heaters and air conditioners, pour cement, and paint homes where needed. Throughout the planning/preparing stage of this immense project Dad plugged on despite being debilitated by ongoing weakness and pain.

Gila River Indian Reservation, AZ - Maricopa & Pinal Cnty. Area
90° Thursday DATE 22 Oct. 1981

Spent a quiet day at home. In preparation for Versal's upcoming work he spent some hours carefully marking every piece of his tools with his V. But he has another apprehension besides the loss of his tools:

"I feel I've aged 10 years over this summer here. I really fear my physical weakness in trying to work on these homes. No way can I work now as I could just a year ago. Look at my arms! I've always been proud of my big strong arms - but now they're flabby and terrible. Yet every kind of work or exercise I try makes my stomach hurt so! What can I do?"

Versal, in all his pain and afflictions has amazed me. His patience! His testimony! His dedication! He always has been big and very strong, with marvelous arms and shoulders.

As we studied today (we're in Miracle of Forgiveness) he with tears in his eyes commented on other blessings we've had over the years:

"These Indians can't understand the joy we've had in almost 50 years of being together and raising 8 kids!"

Another interesting thing this day - Pres. Reagan, publically announced on TV that our nation is in a recession. It's been there quite a while!

Fixing Oldsters' Homes

During late September and throughout October Dad was in his element as supervisor during the initial phase of the Colony's home fix-up project. He strategized, coordinated, and gathered materials — obtaining many items such as doors, windows, and wheelchairs through his friend and former branch president Darrell Farrell, who had a treasure trove of construction items stored at his Phoenix home.

Mom formed her own plans for the project. Knowing that when the home repairs actually began, her assistance would be minimal, yet planning to stick with her mission companion through the long days of labor, she purchased "2 pair of pillowcases and a nice tablecloth to embroider during the times when I'm having to wait in the little pickup for Versal as he fixes oldsters' homes."[74]

Mom — 28 Oct. 1981

Versal aches and hurts and is sweaty again! Oh! How I wish we could find a cure for his pains and troubles! There's so much we want to do here.

And so, aches or not, we had to drive to Phoenix today. First we stopped at Pee Posh to get a purchase order [for construction materials]. On to Lumberjack [a building supply store] to get an $800 invoice filled. But there we learned that Versal will have to specify how many right and how many left-handed screen doors will be needed. These will have to be ordered. So we have more homework to do.

Mom — 6 Nov. 1981

Getting back to familiar work is therapy for Versal — he hasn't tired as much as I'd feared. He's still using Raquelle's Preparation H on his hemorrhoids, but only 2-3 times a day.

Mom—16 Nov. 1981

Now that Versal and his 2 Ind. helpers have finished cleaning, organizing and fixing the Pee Posh garage, have built a sturdy tool closet in it, have painted it, we start the next step.

With several hundred dollars worth of new Pee Posh carpenter tools carefully — and we hope safely — stored in that tool closet, Versal (and I) started a material's survey of the 1st 10 homes on a priority list determined by the Pee Posh Resident Board. So now we are going to homes, and that's interesting.

Mom — 28 Nov. 1981

Again Versal too miserable to do much. . . [To fill the time while he rests] I'm doing lots of writing, lots of embroidery work. We study, presently are finishing *A Marvelous Work and A Wonder.* We are worrying as to how Versal can stay up to work on the houses next week as the screen doors are supposed to be in then at Lumberjack [a building supply store].

Cancer & Mission Release

Early this morning we agreed that Versal is going downhill fast and we'd better get to a doctor today, Mom wrote in her journal on 30 Nov. 1981. Though Versal's cold is improving, he's in constant and growing pain rectally.

We drove to Pee Posh for Versal to explain our situation to Mitch [overseer of the home fix-up project] and to tell her that Lumberjack had phoned us that the screen doors are now in and the 1st home-repair orders can be picked up."

. . . By 2:30 we were again at Dr. Wood's 2nd floor office. This was supposed to have been our check-out checkup, but Versal has all original ailments, the rectal one increasing. So Dr. Wood examined Versal, then decided to use a spectroscope and looked and looked. No hemorrhoids! Nothing amiss! . . . He also asked us to go to a urologist, Dr. Mobley. He secured an appointment for tomorrow.[75]

The following day Dr. Mobley examined Dad and discovered a new problem, this one of greater concern — a small growth about the size of a pea on his enlarged prostate. He assured them that this type of tumor or cancer, whichever it was, was slow-growing and that they had caught it early but he recommended a biopsy and further checking in the hospital.

Mom and Dad fasted the next day then drove to Tempe for an interview with Pres.Val Parke, president of the Arizona Tempe Mission. They told him of Dad's health concerns. Later that evening Mom recorded President Parke's counsel:

Mom — 1 Dec. 1981

Pres. Parke listened carefully, then he sat thoughtful. At last he said: "I feel strongly, Elder Davis, that we should let you go home and regain your health. We could give you a medical furlough, or we can hope you'll accept another mission call later. Certainly you've served valiantly and well. I promise that I'll replace you at the Maricopa Branch by the end of Dec. as we have 7 couples assigned to us then. I'll carefully study the qualifications of the incoming couples and assign the couple who will be able to carry on the fine programs you have initiated."

Our relief in knowing that a couple would be available to replace us! That our little Twig wouldn't be closed and given up! That Versal's hard-earned projects wouldn't be abandoned! That someone else would love our Indians and carry on the work with the new [branch] presidency! We both cried. Thankful!

We asked if we could stay one week, or at least until after Community meeting next Mon. nite, for we wanted to say goodbye to all our friends and build some bridges for the new couple coming in. We planned to leave next Tues.

Mom — 3 Dec. 1981

Versal and I have very mixed emotions. We don't want to leave! We don't want to go home! We're realizing more and more how much we love these people. But now the decision is no longer ours! So, we begin preparations though we feel like deserters.

Tearful Goodbyes

(Dad's Journal, Dec. 6, 1981)

President. Parke, I respect your recommendation but could we remain one more week?" I asked.

"Well, if you wish, but please do not remain any longer than that. Your condition is such that I feel you should return home and immediately consult your doctor."

This conversation was a result of my worsening physical condition while Thelma and I were in the mission field, assigned to the Gila River Indian Reservation and especially the Maricopa Colony.

The sudden decision to return home was sobering because we were having great success and were enjoying the closeness of these Indian people. My request to remain another week came as a result of our desire to meet with several of the Indian families and say goodbye to them. Also, Monday evening following was the regularly scheduled time for the #7 District Meeting of the Civic Community. We had attended these regularly and we were well-received.

So, in the few days prior to the community meeting we visited several of our dearest Indian friends and expressed our appreciation to them. They, likewise, returned their regards.

Monday evening arrived and we drove to the Community Center. We were graciously received as we took our seats around the large square made of tables. I arose and walked over to the chairman, Ron Novakuku, and simply stated I would like a few minutes to address the group. He nodded his head and I returned to my seat!

Prayer was offered by Nick Sunn (often Thelma and I were asked to do this) after which some preliminaries were taken care of.

Mom and Dad on the last full day of their mission, saying goodbye to the Red and Lennidine McMillan family — the family Mom termed "the greatest hope for the future of this tiny branch,"[77]



Then Ron Novakuku quietly said that the time was mine (or ours).

I slowly arose, Indian fashion, and then expressed my love and respect to all of them. I told them of our plans to leave the area. Thelma arose and offered her tearful goodbye and then sat down. I then arose and said, "We will not remain for the rest of the meeting. However, we wish to say goodbye to each of you and shake hands. Furthermore, we want the traditional Indian handshake (this involves grasping the thumbs)."

Each extended his, or her, hand in a warm clasp. When I came to big, all-Indian, Ron Novokuku, I extended my hand which he firmly grasped. Then he threw both arms around me, hugged me closely, and said, "God bless you, Elder Davis." Then releasing me, he did the same to Thelma as tears streamed down his cheeks. Tears were evident in the eyes of many, including our own.

In separate instances of the past few days, this same emotion was very manifest.

It is common belief that Indians are stoic, unresponsive, unemotional. But I do not share this assertion. Our experiences proved that Indians can, and do, demonstrate deep feelings.

Heading Home

At the time of their release, Mom and Dad were fully involved with many investigators and a number of worthy projects: they were teaching thirteen investigators; spearheading the branch Christmas play and party; ready to begin the actual repairs of oldsters' homes after weeks of detailed planning and preparation; fellowshipping the Mack gang; making plans for spring roadshows; setting up an Indian Scout group; and in the midst of preparations for teaching financial management and sewing classes at the Pee Posh Community Center. Their hearts ached at having to cut short their service and leave the people they had grown to love behind.[77]

Mom and Dad loaded their little Toyota pickup and headed back to Logan, Utah, on Dec. 7, 1981. They were accompanied by LaVel, who had driven from Texas to make sure they arrived home safely.

Post-Mission Notes

In May 1983, a year and a half after their mission release, Mom and Dad returned to the Maricopa Colony to participate in the sealing of the Red and Lennidine McMillan family in the Mesa Temple. Mom said the sealing of the four beautiful children, all dressed in white, was impressive. In the evening they participated in a small reception for the newly sealed family at the Maricopa Branch church house.

The next day they were greeted warmly by several old friends at the Pee Posh Community Center who urged them to stay for lunch, which they did.

And they met Elder and Sister Watkins, the missionary couple who had replaced them and were staying in the trailer house parked next to the church with its basketball court in the back. Mom described the Watkins as: a wonderful, dedicated couple. He's 77, has even had open-heart surgery while on this mssion. She'a had a running battle with allergies. But they've persisted and worked and baptized a number of Indians — enough that there are enough Indians to administer and pass the Sacrament.[78]

Attendance at the Maricopa Branch had increased to an average of 30 members, with as many as 55 coming on occasion.[79]

Mom and Dad also drove to various Indian homes where they were warmly welcomed. They also spent time with their dear, mission friends, Darrell and Phyllis Farrell, at their home in Phoenix.

"President Bartlett," the current Maricopa branch president, urged them to consider a second mission there in the same branch, an idea both Mom and Dad were excited about despite the intense summer heat with its debilitating effect on Dad. Mom wrote: Versal is eager and willing to go back there. Maybe by fall — if he continues to improve — we ll finally be able to go on another mission."



Versal & Thelma Davis, Lakewood, CO, 5 Aug. 1984

Chapter Eleven

Older Years

1981-1985

VLD

Prostate Cancer

I hardly know how to compose this journal entry. Dad wrote on 14 Jan. 1982. *Words come hard as I try to formulate my emotions into written entry.*

This has been a very informative day but a very, very sobering one. Simply, but bluntly speaking, I was told by my doctor that I had cancer of the prostate gland. I was not entirely surprised but never-the-less the news struck deeply. . . . Further testing should disclose how much the malignancy has spread. If further treatment seems justified, then I will consent — if not, then I will decline.

If the answer is no then I hope the family will understand my position. After all I've enjoyed a full and productive life and if soon it is cut short, then I should not complain.[1]

After a bone scan and a few more days of tense waiting, Dad was told no sign of cancer had been found in his bones.[2] An angiogram a week later confirmed the welcome news and tipped the scales for Dad's consent to undergo radiation treatment.[3] He and Mom began a two month, five-days-a-week regimen of driving back and forth between Logan and Ogden for the 10-minute treatments.

We must be at that hospital [St. Benedicts Hospital in Ogden] *for 10 min. every day Mon. thru Fri.,* Mom wrote to Duane, who had only two weeks left to serve on his mission. *But the weather gives us variety. This week we've had blizzards that caused roads to be closed. The temps are 30 degrees at night, glorious sun daytime. We stay sometimes at Wayne and Holly's in Syracuse.*[4] [Wayne Hall was Mom's brother.]

It wasn't long before Dad became acquainted with other cancer patients from Logan who were also making the daily trek to Ogden for radiation treatments and a mutually benefical carpool was formed. This left Mom free to pursue church and personal interests at home. The carpool bunch was like a mobile cancer support group; their lighthearted banter to and from Ogden provided needed distraction and comradery.

The radiation treatments were debilitating but they spawned proactive hope — Dad grew more optimistic about his future. He exuberantly wrote Bernice Wright, his beloved niece and fishing companion in St. Anthony:

Dear 2nd Best,

I thought that I should let you know how things are at this time. After 9 doctors, 4 hospitals, 5 clinics, 2 anesthesiologists, and a harem of nurses — plus thousands of dollars — it appears that you will have to face the fact that I will be around to catch the biggest trout. . . . my problem is localized and I have a 75% chance of complete recovery. So I'm sorry, keep in shape and check your fishing tackle. I intend to defend my self-appointed title. I don't show mercy when I'm involved in a fishing contest.

[signed] *"The Champ"*



Bernice Wright, ready to fish with Mom and Dad, 1979.

Bernice was the daughter of Dad's sister, Merlie, and had grown up with him on the Davis ranch north of St. Anthony. She and Dad were both light-hearted and a bit brash; they played off each other's sense of humor continuously. Their love for each other remained deep and constant throughout their lives.

Referencing this closeness, Dad wrote in the same letter quoted on the previous page:

I thank a lot for your concern. It has given me a great deal of comfort. It becomes easy to learn who one's best friends and relatives really are when the chips are really down."

Words Cannot Express

(Flashback, Journal V, p. 84)

How I was privileged to meet, and know, and court, and marry my companion is a constant source of joy to me. Surely, some divine plan provided us with the situations which brought us together.

I knew her when we were classmates in the fourth grade in school. I knew her as a respected member of many of the same classes we shared together in the department grades and then also in high school.

During these years I certainly did not regard her or anyone else as a marriage partner. But I can and do say that I certainly maintained a high respect for her abilities as a scholar.

Actually, we never went together until the night of the final high school graduation ceremonies. This "date" had been arranged by Bernice, my older niece, who had been "chumming" a great deal with Thelma. As time went by we dated more frequently until both of us only rarely went with anyone else.

I always felt comfortable with her; she was "my sort of gal." We had great fun together as we did many things. We enjoyed the togetherness of others as we went driving, to dances, shows, church, etc.

Her desire to excel drove her to complete a basic college course at Ricks College in Rexburg. During these years we courted steadily. Upon graduation, she obtained a teaching contract to teach in Teton Basin, Idaho. Our courtship carried into this situation and then in December of 1936 we became engaged to be married. This union took place on Feb. 12, 1937. She continued teaching until the end of the school year in the spring. Then we were able to remain together all the time as we lived upon the home ranch.

Our early years of marriage were ones of great joy as we faced life together and as we adjusted well to each other. Children became a part of our existence; church and religion became more and more important. Recreation was easy as we both enjoyed such things as sports, swimming, fishing, hunting, and limited travel. She had not, prior to our marriage, done many of the things that I loved to do but she soon learned to love our togetherness this way.

I can truthfully say that when vital decisions had to be made she was very helpful and certainly did her part, if necessary. I've always confided in her in these matters and together we have always tried to do what seemed best. Of course mistakes were made but we shared the bad as we shared the good.

Thelma has never been a demanding person so far

as possession of "things of the world" is concerned. I've really appreciated her willingness to manage with or without.

Her devotion to her eight children has been tremendous. Her love and concern as a mother is an ideal that these same sons and daughters will find hard to surpass. All this has been manifest as she has shown me the love, which I have treasured.

In these many years she has never stopped searching for more and more knowledge. Her love of good literature is boundless. To learn about religious aspects, particularly of our church, has been a creditable obsession. I love her for not stopping.

I know words cannot express how deeply I feel about her and ours. No pen can record how deep my love is for her. At this time, in 1981, I share my time, loyalty, dedication, and devotion with her as we, together, do missionary work. I cannot conceive, after 45 years with her, of any other in my life. No man, as a husband and father, could ask for more than I've enjoyed with her as my wife and, hopefully, my eternal companion.

Dad's Sentimental Side

Dad gave Mom lovely gifts. I remember him presenting her with boxes of chocolate or jewelry — beautiful brooches or necklaces with matching earrings — on her birthday or Valentine's Day. His good friend, Wendell Kofoed, was manager at Needhams Jewelers and often gave him good deals on these items.

I recall the look of anticipation in Dad's eyes as he watched Mom unwrap the small, beautifully wrapped boxes (obviously wrapped at Needhams with their gold embossed stickers on the ribbons). She was always appreciative but I believe Dad was the one who received the most enjoyment from the gift-giving. Mom had some lovely pieces of costume jewelry; I don't think she personally purchased any of them.

On their 45th wedding anniversary (12 Feb. 1982), a few months after Dad wrote the Flashback on the opposite page, Mom recorded: *In the evening, I was really touched and humbled for my loving, contrite husband* [they had a disagreement earlier in the day] *took me into the privacy of our bedroom and handed me a beautifully wrapped box. A lovely new wristwatch! And expressions of love! How blessed I am.*

One gift stands out, though, as representative of Dad's tender thoughtfulness in Mom's behalf. He bought her a new piano, the fulfillment of a lifelong desire and one of the few expensive "luxuries" she ever owned. And he bought it on a whim. Mom described the extraordinary purchase:

The Davis clan had Thanksgiving a day late — today [Friday, 1982], here at old 371 W. 2nd So. Arising at 7 a.m., I saw Duane and Melanie off on a snowmobile excursion with Robert Hansen and Laureen (yes, Laureen is slipping under Vel's 16-yr.-old-wire a bit — quite a bit). I put the turkey in the oven, made 6 pie shells, stirred-up the pumpkin goop, broke-up a loaf of bread for dressing. Then Versal said, "I'm going to run uptown to get some developing chemicals." I needed a few things, and I could spare just 1 hr., so I went with him. We returned at 12:15, $1300.00 poorer. Versal bot me, us, a beautiful, beautiful, brand new Story and Clark console model piano. Dunkley Music in Cache Valley Mall is going out of business and closing out their pianos and marked them down one fourth. So Versal bot one — something I'd never even hoped for! What a Christmas present! The piano, the family [23 Davises], and Versal and I all arrived here about the same time so there was quite a hubbub.[8]

With the glow of what she described as "a gift for my soul" still warming her, Mom philosophized a few days later:

My new piano! It brings such a warm feeling to my heart — I guess it means more to me than I'd realized — a door opening. Oh! I never hope to be a great pianist — I never did; but I've always had such a desire to learn music, too. And to train my poor, wavering, inaccurate voice! I'm tired of feeling apologetic about it, and shrinking every time anyone mentions "sing." I know there's music in eternity and I'm hoping to participate joyfully!

I want to help Versal, too, with his beautiful [voice] gift; I know we're supposed to use and polish and develop these talents. Whatever I learn I get to take on with me. I'm 62 now, but I intend to use these next few years as intensely as I can, to make this last segment of my life full of history, genealogy, church service, family, study, music, and Versal.

Mom began taking piano lessons right away from her eccentric friend and master pianist/organist Richard Hill.

I was appointed to sing in a trio as we sang the hymn "An Angel From On High." We practiced several times and then, with great dread, I sang before the attendance at a stake conference.

This rendition opened the way to a lifetime of vocal opportunity. As time went by I was asked to sing with others as we performed at civic and school functions. In many cases I sang solos. This took special preparation but over the years I have enjoyed such the most.

I sang for many years in a male quartet composed o Myrthen Bassett, Les Dayton, my brother Floyd, and myself. This foursome lasted for almost twenty years. It broke up when I, with Thelma and family, moved from St. Anthony to Logan. (See singing log on p. 155.)

My activity in the vocal field extended to church services, funerals, civic events, school meetings, area musicals, and even political gatherings.

I've enjoyed ward choir very much and have been a member wherever I've lived. In the Logar 1st Ward, as 1st counselor in the bishopric, I was directly responsi ble for the choir. I sang in the unit even though I was very busy in the bishopric assignment.

I've never had a moment of formal training and I cannot "read music" as such, but, the ability to feel tonal quality has been easy for me. I simply state this as a fact, not something to boast about.

Good music has been precious to me especially the true, harmonious kind. So-called "pop music" is, in my opinion, terrible and should not even be classed as music.

Thelma has always backed me up in my singing activities. She often helped me as she played the necessary accompaniment on the piano. I'm grateful to her.

One other thing I should mention is my mastery of the harmonica. I remember, as a young boy, an old harmonica my brother, Wayne, owned. I don't remem ber when I finally mastered the instrument. I suppose I simply "played by ear." That is the way I still play a "mouth-organ."



A photo from Story & Clark's company brochure illustrating **the piano Dad gave to Mom at Thanksgiving 1978.** The console was tender evidence of his regard for her dreams — she had long wanted to learn to play the piano.

An Apparent Talent

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 134 & Vol. III, p. 148)

Mother was an active member of the St. Anthony First Ward Choir. She sang alto and had been attending rehearsals for years.

One time, for some reason unknown to me now, she insisted that I join her in attending the weekly practice. I was somewhat hesitant but, because I was only fourteen years old, I was forced to obey her desires.

So I became a singer in the bass section of the large ward choir. For several weeks I sat by a Mr. Tuckett who assisted me a great deal. I learned several of the special numbers being rehearsed. Then it happened —

A Tragic Death

On Friday, 12 Feb. 1982, Carol Davis Elvin, Dad's niece — the only child of Warren and Dorie Davis — was murdered in her home in Denver. She was 36. Unmarried and her parents having died years earlier, Dad, was deemed her "next-of-kin." He identified her body and handled the settlement of her estate.

Carol and I were cousins. She had been raised in the east. Our paths had never crossed until we both found ourselves living in Denver in the early 80s. Near the same age, we finally became acquainted and were developing a warm cousin-friendship at the time of her death. Carol was vivacious, articulate, and outgoing; I felt her loss deeply.

A wellknown artist who was accomplished in the art of scrimshaw — the decorating and carving of bones, shells and ivory — Carol's work was highly prized and her pieces sold well.[10] However, she also made money dealing cocaine, which police believe was the cause for her death — a drug deal gone bad.[11] Carol was found stabbed and bludgeoned to death with a cinder block at the bottom of her basement steps. Her killer was never found.

Following the cremation of her body (a request she had expressed to her friends), Dad and Mom took her ashes to St. Anthony



Carol Davis Elvin
1945-1982



Davis family members at the graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin in the Riverview Cemetery, St. Anthony, Idaho, 1 March 1982. Carol was cremated and her ashes, encased in a redwood box handcrafted by Dad, were buried above her father's casket in the same grave.

L-R: Wayne C. Davis (Carol's cousin, son of Dad's brother Wayne Davis) and his wife DeLora LaWana Davis White (cousin, daughter of Wayne Davis) and her daughter Terry White; Jay Loveland (cousin, son of Dad's sister, Vera) and his wife, Helen Damaris Clark (cousin, daughter of Dad's sister, Merlie) and her husband Vernon Clark; Bernice Wright (cousin, daughter of Dad's sister Meriel); Carrie Davis (aunt, wife of Dad's brother, Floyd); Versal LaVel Davis (Carol's uncle) and Myrtle Davis (aunt, wife of Dad's brother Wayne). Mom took the photo.

My Private Hair Stylist

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 145)

As a child on the ranch I did not worry or concern myself about how my hair looked. Warren, my oldest brother, used to clip my hair as close to my scalp as possible. While in school, I was allowed to let it grow until I could comb it in a straight-back pompadour style. During my teen years it grew to fair length but I can say I usually kept it groomed. I had a distinctive widow's peak and was chided about this a great deal.

After my marriage, I visited the barber shop regularly until about age 30. We acquired electricity about that time and also a pair of electric clippers. Thelma talked me into letting her cut my hair. I was somewhat chagrined at first but soon I began to realize the savings in terms of money.

As time went by, I developed a bald spot more and more. Cutting and trimming became easier.

Thelma has cut my hair for many, many years and I am glad and appreciative to her.



1916 1927 1947 1966 1982

Making Plans

After Dad concluded his radiation treatments and was beginning to feel better, he and Mom sat down one evening in April 1982 to talk about scheduling. She outlined:

Versal and I sat in the 2 easy chairs discussing our summer plans. As Versal feels better and stronger each day, our hopes rise: a few days at Bear Lake helping Keith [Mom's brother] *with the "Bear Lake Monster"* [a houseboat he was building]*; Vel and Colleen's April 16-26th trip here from Texas; a mid-May trip to Rich and Twila's for her college graduation; our 2 family reunions in July; our 6-week trip to Alaska; our departure on another mission this fall or early winter — we hope. Spliced into all this, a big garden and refilling all our bottles and renewing our storage plus more cleaning and painting on this old home we love. . . . [and] "There are wedding bells in the offing, too."*[12] [Duane proposed to his longtime sweetheart Melanie Anderson that evening and a month later, Deb, in Texas, became engaged to Trey Nelson. Both couples planned July weddings.]

In preparation for their planned Alaska trip at the end of the summer Dad began growing an "Alaska beard," as he had done for previous Alaska trips, only this time it was mottled with a great deal of gray, *"like an old badger"* he explained. Of his beard, Mom wrote Deb:

"I was surprised that they called us as witnesses in our temple session a couple of weeks ago: we were sitting on the very back row and, too, Versal has this beard. But they did.

And his beat-up old cowboy hat! You should see it! We found it on the road out in Arizona.

Versal is feeling better all the time after a very miserable post-radiation 2-3 weeks. We're going fishing one day a week and he's out working in the garden, on cars, etc. so his hands are grease-embedded but Versal's pallor is leaving. Sometimes he says the beard is to prove he can still grow hair.[13]

The $122.00 Trout

(Flashback, Journal IV, p. 66, spring 1982)

Mom, let's pick up the Nortons and drive to Preston. We'll pick up our fishing licenses for the year."

This was my remark to Thelma as we contemplated doing some early preseason fishing. It was April and the general season would not open until the better part of May. However, Johnsons Reservoir, near Preston, was open for year round fishing.

We drove to Preston where Wes and Thora Norton and Thelma and I purchased our out-of-state licenses. Each license cost $30.50.

"Let's go fishing right away," Wes said as we journeyed back to Logan.

"O.K.," I replied, " I'll rig up the boat and we'll all go tomorrow."

"Well, Thora and I will fix up a lunch if you guys prepare the boat and tackle," Mom added.

So the next day we utilized my truck as we journeyed toward the small, open reservoir east of Preston. The weather at that early date was threatening but we enthusiastically kept on until we reached the boat landing on the northeast side.

We bundled up in warm coats then placed the boat in the cold water. Soon all of us were in the open boat and rigging our fishing gear.

"I'll try this Mepp's spinner," Wes said.

"Good, I'll give this super duper a chance," Mom enjoined.

"Well, I'm going to try a fly for a while," I entered. "Thora, why don't you try some bait?"

Thereupon we commenced fishing and tried to keep warm. There was a wind blowing and soon snow began to fall and make matters worse.

"We are surely going to appreciate any fish we catch today," Thora said.

"Yes, and I think we are all crazy to be here on such a dismal day. We've been here two hours and haven't caught a single fish," Mom remarked.

"Oh well, keep trying," Wes added.

The snow began falling more heavily and soon we were each ready to go home but none of us wanted to be first to admit such.

Finally, I offered a plan. "I'll steer this boat across the lake and back. If we have no luck by then we'll load up and go back home."

"Sounds good to me, my dear," Thelma replied.

So we travelled across the lake. No fish. Then I directed the boat back toward the loading dock. We were cold, wet, and miserable.

We were near the shore when Wes excitedly yelled, "I've got one, stop the boat so I can pull him in!"

Soon Wes had landed his catch, a small rainbow trout.

"I suggest that we load up and go home, anyway," I offered.

"We'll all agree to that," Thora replied.

So soon we loaded the boat on the trailer, gathered our fishing gear and were ready to go home. We felt defeated until Wes went to the boat, picked up the single fish, held it high and triumphantly exclaimed, "We are champions! Look at what we have, a beautiful $122.00 rainbow trout!"

Yes, our license costs added up to that figure



Wesley Norton, pictured here, and his wife, Thora, were Mom and Dad's best friends during their older years. Not only were they frequent fishing companions, they also played card games, shared dinners, attended church and community functions together and made plans for an excursion to Alaska . For years Wes served as bishop of the Logan First Ward with Dad as a counselor. their brotherhood was deep. The Nortons even visited Mom and Dad on their mission. Wes died of a heart attack while officiating in the Logan Temple on 19 May 1983.

Fisherman's Luck

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 23)

Let's try bait and see what happens," Thelma offered.

O.K., it should be alright," I replied.

This took place on Johnson's Reservoir in southern Idaho in early May of 1982. This small, deep and beautiful body of water was open to year-round fishing. Almost all other impoundments were closed until regular season opening in June.

After launching our aluminum boat to which a small trolling motor was attached, we baited up and tried several locations, but to no avail.

"Well, I'm going to put on a small Mepps spinner and troll. Are you going to try something similar?" I stated and then asked.

"If you're going to troll, I guess I'll have to do the same," Thelma replied.

So we started trolling. Almost immediately I hooked a nice rainbow. I reeled the fish in, feeling I had now done the right thing.

Then Thelma caught one, then another, then still another.

"Let's trade poles. It seems my spinner is more effective than yours," Thelma offered as she felt somewhat sorry for me.

"Well, if you insist," I hopefully replied as we traded fishing poles.

No sooner had I completed the trade than Thelma exclaimed, "Hey, I've got one on already!"

Please tell me why I only caught one and she managed to acquire eleven — even using my pole!! Can there be such a thing, as many believe — FISHERMAN'S LUCK?!

Dad and Mom's fishing buddy, Bernice Wright, had this little ditty tacked to the wall of her ranch home near St. Anthony. Dad loved it.[15]



When Fishermen Meet

When fishermen meet an entirely new language seems to develop. This short excerpt is just an example of a typical conversation between two easy-going, dedicated fishermen:

"Hiyamac,"
"Lobuddy"
"Binearlong?"
"Coplours."
"Cetchanenny?"
"Goddafew."
"Kindarthay?"
"Bassencarp."
"Ennysizetoom?"
"Cuplapowns."
"Hittinhard?"
"Sordalike."
"Wahchoozin?"
"Gobbawurms."
"Fisanonaboddum?"
"Rydononaboddum."
"Whatchadrinkin?"
"Jagajimbeam."
"Igoddago."
"Tubad."
"Seeyaroun."
"Yeatakedeezy."
"Guluk."

Mom's Sequel

(Mom's Journal, 27 April 1982)

Versal had selected today as a fishing day. We were a bit disappointed that Vel had to fly home to Georgetown, Texas without once going fishing with Versal. He'd certainly wanted to! But on Vel's free days the weather was so cold. Several times Versal tried to phone Bp. Norton, but no one was home there, so just Versal and I went after I'd hung out my washing I started yesterday, and after we'd scripture studied. We're starting into Isaiah now and really need some in-depth work as it's so pertinent to our time.

Today was an Alaska-weather-summer day up on beautiful little Johnson's Reservoir: the sun, when not screened by clouds, made us take our coats off. The wind and clouds made us put them back on. It rained just enrough to require rain gear for about an hour. Versal had bot another silver Mepps spinner like the one I'd cot all the fish on last Fri., but he'd bot it one size bigger. Today the smaller silver spinner was still the winner, tho Versal cot 3 on flies and we'd managed one or 2 on the bigger Mepps. We'd catch a fish about every half hour. Trolling. Almost totally in the shallower inlet area of the lake.

Versal is not only an enthusiastic fisherman, and a good one, he's a most persistent, patient one. We stay 'til dark! We finally cot our limits — almost 12 fish, but one was a bass. The limit is 12 trout. We just couldn't catch one more trout!

But we possibly stayed too long. By the time we drove the 25 miles home it was 9:30. I fixed supper while Versal, as always, cleaned our 12 fish (one 2½-pound one!). Duane, tired from his 12-hr. shift at Texaco

plus a stint sanding on Melanie's cedar chest, hadn't eaten. However, just as we sat down to eat, Melanie phoned and Duane just grabbed the last piece of his cherry pie and left in response to her summons! So Versal and I ate alone, then he retreated right to bed while I got into a hot bath to de-scent and to at last get warm. That last hour out was cold!

But Versal couldn't sleep. I'm afraid he'd over-exerted. His legs twitched. He couldn't relax, so finally he got up and tried his old-faithful hot bath. But even that didn't relax him so he spent one of his wandering-from-chair-to-bed nights.



Mom cut this photo from a magazine, glued it into their 1983 Davis family album, and added her caption. It captures the essence of the peaceful pastime they shared for decades, especially in their older years.

I couldn't resist this picture – it's what Versal loves most at this age and stage of his life: our old tin boat, Condie Reservoir – and this is indeed an accurate replica of the countryside on the upper part of Condie. Condie is a small lake, usually peaceful and quiet. Often we've fished there all alone.

Heart Attack!

(Journal III, pp. 21-24, 25 June 1982)

I had a heart attack! Here's what happened. Thelma and I had decided to apply for another missionary assignment. My health had been very questionable for about a year. Our mission experience in Arizona had been fraught with extreme heat discomfort. There I had developed unexplained abdominal pain and was hospitalized because of a massive hemorrhoid attack, which required surgery. Additionally, after returning home to Logan, I was subjected to extensive radiology treatments for prostate cancer.

However, during the last two months I have felt much better and, therefore, our mission call was a priority consideration. We had received our medical forms requiring signing from a dentist and a medical doctor.

First, our teeth were worked upon and we were given clearance. The afternoon of our dental appointment I worked for about three hours at Ace Mill repairing the mill delivery truck. (A week or so earlier I had been working on this same project but, because of a tight sensation in my chest, I returned home. However, I experienced no pain and, after retiring, the sensation left and I rested very well.)

Two days after the dental appointment we reported for physicals at Dr. Daines' office. This proved routine and he intimated that he would approve our mission request. However, just before leaving he asked me if I had experienced anything unusual regarding my health. I replied that two or three days earlier I had felt the chest discomfort.

He then made this remark, "I can't detect any reason for alarm, but let's just wait a few days before I sign this form."

I agreed and then Thelma and I went to the Logan Regional Hospital where we had routine blood tests taken as part of our pre-mission medical workup.

After this we returned home, worked a few minutes in our garden, invited the Nortons over to make final plans for our intended Alaska trip (which we plan to take before serving our mission), had supper, then retired for the night.

But the chest discomfort had returned and although no pain was present, I could not go to sleep. About midnight I arose and put on a pair of trousers and a shirt. I sat in a recliner rocker for about two hours then went back to the bedroom, and, without removing my clothes, I again lay down and tried to sleep.

About 3 a.m. I dejectedly arose and sat on the edge of the bed. I had remained so for about 15 minutes when the sudden pain struck and I desperately reached for Thelma. I felt as if a dagger were piercing my sternum and emanating between my shoulder blades. Breathing was difficult and came in short gasping breaths. My right shoulder pained me and my left arm lost almost all feeling. I sweat profusely and I became, according to Thelma, ashen white. Also I felt weak and unstable.

I reached for Thelma and gasped, "Mom this has hit me hard. I've got to have help." I was gasping for breath.

Mom's journal continues the account:

I slipped on my robe and went into the kitchen to phone the Emergency Room to have a doctor on hand. But suddenly Versal called desperately — "Come on! Don't wait to phone!"

I rushed back to the bedroom. He was suddenly sweating profusely, white and gasping.

I threw on my clothes from yesterday and called to sleepy-eyed Duane who'd sacked-out, as usual, on the couch, "Your Dad's sick. We've got to get him to the hospital."

In Duane's little red Chevette Versal gasped: "Don't stop for anything!" And Duane didn't! We drove on the nearly deserted streets thru red lights, stop signs, and even on the wrong side of the street when cars were in our way. Just as we turned into the emergency access to the hospital a police car tailed us in. Duane ran into the hospital and, within seconds, nurses came running out with a wheelchair.

Thank heaven! Yes, I am so grateful that 3 nurses and Dr. Bishop were right there. They stripped Versal's shirt and garments off and began to attach heart monitors to his chest. One nurse gave Versal a shot of morphine; another attached an IV to his right arm and more medicine began to seep into him. The ECG machine beeped Versal's heartbeats erratically: they slowed; twice there were pauses in the sounds and Duane and I looked at each other. The needle registered in the 30s, dipped to the 20s, fluttered to the 40s.

"Call Bp. Norton," Versal gasped weakly. But Duane quickly responded: "I have oil right here Dad. There isn't time to call Br. Norton! Let Dr. Bishop and me administer to you. I always carry consecrated oil on my key ring."

And they did. Quietly, Dr. Michael T. Bishop, dressed in hospital gown, anointed Versal and then Duane M. Davis sealed the anointing and administered to his Dad. It was a simple, direct plea that Versal be spared and healed "to

complete his mission here on earth." I felt a peace!

Soon Dr. Merrill Daines appeared, and then Lauris.

With Versal's heartbeat stabilizing between the 30s and 40s, he was transferred to the ICU (Intensive Care Unit) on the 3rd floor and there we anxiously watched as the monitor wavered, mainly in the 40s. Versal was plugged-in to oxygen, to the IV, to the monitor.

Tam, Lauris and Duane and I took turns staying with Versal. Lauris also assumed the responsibility of letting the other 5 know about this drastic turn-of-events. Tamara stayed all nite Sat. nite, sleeping in the little waiting room. That was a fiasco as she reported Sun. that 6 drunks were in there part of the nite. One of their friends/relatives had attempted suicide by shooting himself in the stomach.[16]

Two days after Dad's heart attack, when the crisis was over and Dad was on the mend, Mom, now much more relaxed, described his buoyancy and irrepressible humor:

The past two days have been so hectic and humbling that I've had no time or privacy to write. Right now I'm sitting on one of the red chairs in the little Intensive Care Unit waiting room, alone. Versal is asleep (as he's doing much of the time) next door. He's all harnessed with green oxygen tubes into his nose, a water [saline] IV into his right arm with several little plugs. These are for ready access to put medicine into the water.

Just a little while ago a nurse came and inserted some medicine into the bottom plug with a needle syringe. At just the right moment Versal said, "Ow!" The nurse hesitated — startled. Then she laughed: "You big faker! You can't even feel that!" And he had his laugh.

His attitude is marvelous: he cooperates beautifully with doctors and nurses, and teases every time he gets a chance. He's had a ball tapping the metal part of the heart-sensors stuck to his shoulders. That makes his pulse monitor go wild and the nurses come rushing in, then scold and threaten him. But some would come in later and say: "Show us how you do that![17]



Dad being wheeled out of Logan Regional Hospital to Duane's car, 30 June 1982. He'd been in the hospital 11 days.

At last we were able to bring Versal home again!! Mom wrote. *Now, if all the hubbub and excitement and activity of 2 weddings and 2 family reunions just doesn't throw him!*[18] [Duane's wedding was the next day (July 1), with Deb's two weeks later (July 15) and the Davis reunion on July 16, followed by the Halls on the 17th.]

In Retrospect

(Flashback, Journal D, p. 15, June 27, 1982)

As I am cautioned, because of my very recent, heart attack, to refrain from vigorous physical activity, I am reminded of my father's later years of his life. I, being his last and youngest son, remember those important years very well.

Because of Dad's pioneer lifestyle in the early and middle portions of his life, he was required to do a great deal of hard physical labor. The requirements needed to develop land and build homes, fences, corrals, outbuildings, were many fold. I did not, of course, observe this effort because of my delayed appearance in the scene of his life. But, I'm aware of the history and testimonies of others, which, along with the visible and enduring results, prove that Dad and Mother worked and labored very hard to create a worthwhile existence for themselves and family.



Dad's father
John Gould Davis

When I was a young man or young boy of about six years of age, I well remember when my father was stricken with a heart attack. I did not realize the implications of the illness but I do know that Dad was very ill for a great length of time. Dr. West was our family doctor and I recall his frequent visits to our ranch home as he prescribed treatment for my father.

I can vividly visualize Dad as he sat in a cushioned oak rocker. This piece of furniture had arm rests; the frame was of oak hardwood. Many hours were spent in the living room as Dad rested as best he could. Mother always tried to be nearby.

From the time of Dad's improvement from this worrisome condition to the time of his sudden death about 20 years later in 1942, I cannot remember him doing any sustained hard physical labor. During these years he was not idle, but he [was careful and] obeyed the doctor's advice; he managed to live a normal life.

Many times I labored with him in cleaning ditches, fencing, harvesting, irrigating, tending livestock, and myriads of other chores. But in all cases he paced himself and when excessive physical labor was required, he delegated difficult jobs to those of us who were in our prime of life.

He would employ various labor-saving methods to accomplish needed tasks. Hordes of times I helped him roll a heavy saw log onto a timber wagon rather than simply lift it. The common rope lariat became a useful and effective device in holding and controlling a wild steer or heifer. Shoveling ditches was a slow but steady chore. Harvesting, which involved a great deal of physical effort, was well organized so as to require a minimum of labor.

Irrigating proved to be Dad's most relaxing and rewarding effort. This usually could be done reasonably easy and the eventual results were gratifying. In fact, I must truthfully state that Dad could irrigate land and make it more productive than anyone else I've ever known.

This history of Dad's controlled physical effort is definite proof that adherence to common sense as dictated by specific need can be productive. He enjoyed at least 20 more years of life with Mom and the family. He was active in church work, was involved in civic matters, and earned the love and respect of all who knew him.

As I reflect upon his later life, I know I must at least try to do as he did. I hope I can be reasonably active and alert then pass away very suddenly as he did.

The Last Two Wed

Deb and Duane, the two youngest Davis siblings (of eight), both married in July 1982. Duane's engagement to Melanie Anderson culminated a lengthy, six-year courtship; Deb's promises to Trey Nelson came on the heels of a whirlwind, six-week romance. Both couples were married in the Logan Temple.

Duane & Mel

Duane married Melanie Anderson on 1 July 1982 in the Logan Temple after six years of steady dating and letter-writing (while he served his mission). Melanie was only twelve-years-old when they first met. At the time of their marriage she had just completed high school. Melanie is the daughter of Neil and Lila Anderson (at left in photo), of Wellsville, Utah.





Deb and Trey

Debra married Herman Clements Nelson III (Trey for short) on 15 July 1982 in the Logan Temple. Deb met Trey, a true Texan, while she was working for LaVel in Georgetown, Texas. With only one brother and one cousin, Trey had the daunting task of merging into Deb's family of fifty (with nieces and nephews included). He was most at ease with the kids; he chased and teased them at Logan's Willow Park, where a "welcome picnic" was held the day he arrived. Their play got wilder and rougher, ending in a big water fight in the park's creek. Trey was badly outnumbered.

Empty Nesters

After a few weeks of wedding, honeymoon, and reunion hoopla, Duane and Mel took off for Texas where he began working for LaVel.

Deb and Trey, also headed for Texas, left a few weeks later. Before the new Mr. and Mrs. Nelson left, however, they discovered Deb's head tumors had regrown. More surgery would be needed.

At that news, Dad absolutely wilted. He told Mom: *Many physical exertions are hard on me now, but I believe the nervous strain of concern over our kids is much harder. I feel so much better since I know that Duane and Melanie have arrived safely in Texas. But now this, with Deb and Trey! On their honeymoon! What a blow! I hope Deb and Trey can stand up to this together! What a hard thing!*[19]

A day later Mom noted: *Versal has bounced hard again and isn't feeling well; he has a heaviness in his left arm and general weariness. The events of the past few days have been too much. . . the news of Deb's recurring tumors really hit him hard. He worried and grieved over that. These emotional strains are devestating.*[20]

And so Deb and Trey busily packed their many wedding gifts and their new Church books — Trey had bought $800.00 worth at Deseret Book — into Vel's black Oldsmobile station wagon they used for their wedding trip. Mom wrote, *After the 4 of us knelt in*

prayer, Deb and Trey hugged us, amid a few tears and one of Trey's big picture-up hugs and they drove away toward Logan Canyon and Wyoming at 1 p.m.

Their departure was very sobered by the knowledge that Deb had a very delicate, dangerous head-tumor-operation which must be done soon — so early in their marriage! . . . Thank Heaven for temple marriage and covenants.

And so, for the 1st time in 44½ years, we're childless. Before they left, Trey said: "Won't y'all be kinda lonesome here in this big house?" But, to every age there is a season — and ailing Versal and I are certainly at the quieter, retiring season. We love a quiet house, not even much radio or TV; our studying, gardening, genealogy, temple work, fishing, and canning.

We casually watched a couple of baseball games at Willow Park Field in the lovely cool evening.[21]

Mom tried hard to keep the pace slow for Dad but he was difficult to rein-in. Being cooped up in the house with nothing to do made him irritable. He purchased an old truck to mount his camper on — for fishing jaunts with an eye still looking towards their next Alaska trip. The camper-rig allowed them to get away for simple excursions. On 5 Aug. 1982 Mom recorded:

Today we pulled up our 2½ rows of beans as they're badly infested by little fuzzy orange bugs. I have bottled most of the beans we'll need anyway. Versal watered the garden, packed the camper. At 2 p.m. we picked up Wes and Thora and headed for Condie. Versal is eager to try out our new recreation vehicle. He's spent a lot of time and energy fixing everything on it and it seems to have been good therapy for him — thus far.

Today is Wes and Thora's 45th wedding anniversary — ½ yr. behind us. And Wes did a lot of reminiscing about how poor they were then, but happy. We were all children of the Great Depression.

We cot 9 fish, but it was kinda slow. A gorgeous evening on the little lake among rolling hills of opening grain with a big full moon overhead. No wonder the Lord said His work was very good.

Back at the camper we had the place all to ourselves. Versal fried the fish; I opened 2 cans of chicken noodle soup; Thora sliced some garden-fresh vegetables and we enjoyed a cozy 10 p.m. supper. Then to bed — Wes and Thora, as our guests on the upper deck; Versal and I on the make-down-table bed — narrow, just a little short for Versal, but sufficient. A good night.[22]



Newlyweds Trey and Deb Nelson pack wedding gifts before departing Logan for their new home in Austin, Texas, 28 July 1982. Deb had her 7th major tumor surgery two months later on 17 Sept. Only one month after that she became pregnant and suffered greatly through her whole pregnancy. They eventually had three daughters; Deb's life hung in the balance with each one.

New Plans Replace Old Ones

As Dad's heart mended, other parts of his body deteriorated. His old arthritic-like pains in his back and right leg increased, robbing him of needed sleep. He wandered all night from couch to recliner to tub, his leg throbbing. He felt drained, weak, and miserable — miserable enough that he finally gave up on a planned deep sea fishing trip with some of the family, a huge disappointment. Mom wrote:

At 1 p.m. today Vel, Lauris and Estelle flew northwest [in Vel's plane] *to Portland on the deep sea fishing we'd long planned and Brent has carefully set-up. No way could Versal and I go — he's still mobile, but far too weak and ill and miserable for any trip.* [LaVel, Brent, Brian, and Lauris plus a few others enjoyed the fishing expedition, which pleased Mom and Dad despite their inability to participate.]

So our Alaska trip, our Mission, our deep-sea fishing are all out for this year. Versal clings tenaciously to his beloved plans, but when he finally realizes they're gone, he doesn't sulk or fret, he just starts looking ahead: now to a Christmas trip to Phoenix to see our Indian friends, then on to Texas to visit our kids there.[23]

Dad reluctantly agreed to see a back specialist — he dreaded going to yet another doctor — to see if something could be done to relieve the pain. He was hospitalized in late August while tests were run. The diagnosis: his last four vertebrae were crushed together and his nerves were being pinched in two places. When Mom went to the hospital to bring Dad home, his heart specialist, Dr. Merrill Daines, was there and said, laughingly: "Get him out of here." But then he added soberly: "Boy! We surely don't want to operate now. That back of his is in bad shape! If we can just have 6 months, or 4, or even 2 more away from his heart attack!"[24]

But Mom just couldn't keep Dad down and quiet as his doctors ordered! He was too restless. Mom worried and Dad bristled. Mom recounted:

Versal and I had a tearful, loving discussion of our heart-felt concerns about his health and limitations. . . . We finally agreed that the only wise course we can pursue right now is for him to stay down and quiet as he possibly can for a while. His back and leg (sciatic nerve) are improving, slowly [through rest and heavy medication]. We will plan for his back operation as soon as it is wise. But his heart-healing must come first![25]

Learning Patience

Even though Dad knew he should behave himself and stay down — let his body heal — he just couldn't! Inactivity was so foreign to his nature. When he tried to stay down at first, he got so nervous that he was tense and white and said vehemently: *"I feel like I'll explode! I can't stay here!"*[26]

And he didn't always take his medications like he should. He worried about becoming dependent on them.

Mom, who was anxious about the strain Dad was under physically and emotionally, prodded him to take it easy but her entreaties often backfired causing tension between them. Both were learning patience through this period of suffering.

Mom expressed her apprehensions in her journal (31 Aug. 1982):

This afternoon Versal quietly hugged me and held me — his sweet apology for his brooding. It's hard to even write about it because I cry. This past 14 months have been so hard, and he's fought so magnificently. Many little things hurt and humiliate him like the fact that I carry the groceries, etc. when we shop. Today, this evening, Lauris had to take me to Bobco's to get 10 cases of food storage. Versal didn't want to go with us and I knew why. Yet always before he's been so eager. He just helped me figure and plan our storage; that's all this time.

He watches the sports channel on TV quite a bit. He's never been a TV addict, but, in desperation he has to do something. I'm going to move my sewing machine to where I can watch TV with him; I just can't watch it unless my hands are busy. But I want to be with him, near him. I love him so much.

This evening Versal and I studied Ezekiel some more. I have to wait until he volunteers to study as, at times he doesn't feel like it. I love it when we study together![27]

Dad, too, addressed his depressed state in his 19 Sept. 1982 journal entry: *I feel useless. I'm too weak to do very much physical labor. I'm sure that Thelma becomes saddened when I display signs of a morose attitude. But I do appreciate her as she aids, assists, and comforts me almost constantly.*[28]

Mom tenderly watched over Dad and continually adjusted her schedule to fit his needs. She tried to learn patience along with him. She deliberately cut back her involvement in outside activities and focused on Dad. She wrote:



The rubble of Dad's old paint room at Ace Mill, torn down after the mill moved to 10th West in Logan. On 26 Feb. 1982 Mom wrote: *We witnessed the demise of the old Ace Mill Bldg. Versal's paint room, where he worked for 25 years, is a pile of cinder block rubble. Nostalgically Versal and Earl Jeppson and Trist Roberts walked around the place, which had housed so many dear memories of work and friends.*[28] When he felt well enough following his back surgery, Dad began working for Ace Mill again sporadically at their new location. He worked at his own schedule and relaxed speed, but insisted he be paid on a reduced wage scale as he was no longer as fast and agile as before. *He's so honest,* Mom wrote. *No wonder he's respected, admired and sought out by both his peers and employers!*[28]

As usual, I'll catch up a bit in my journal while Versal sleeps in for another hour. How different our lives are from just a few short years ago! Versal was always up and gone to work at Ace Mill before 7 a.m. He was never late, always early. He consistently worked more hours than any man there — he had the largest family of any man there and took great pride in supporting them. He, by his strength and ingenuity, not only provided for the 10 of us, but paid for me to extend my education for 4 years up at U.S.U.; for the expenses of 4 of his children on missions as well as our own mission; for several thousand dollars lent to various of his children in times of need; for our tithing, fast offerings, building fund and budget.

But now he's having to rest a lot and learn a different kind of persistence and patience. His strength returns so slowly. That radiation [from his three months of daily treatments in the spring] really zapped every organ of his body.

He's working again a little out at the Mill — Ev keeps calling him. But he can only work 2 or 3 hours a day, a day or 2 a week. It's ironic that, in this time of recession — depression — when the unemployment rate has mounted to over 10% for the first time in 40 years and more men 50 years and older are some of the main victims, Versal is still contacted and wanted, needed by Ace Mill, by Ace Construction, by Cache Valley Builders! He's a master craftsman, a good, honest worker. He loves to work.

We've had to shift gears: we go at a slow, quiet pace here; we go fishing — Versal has to get outdoors! We are really enjoying our Bible study. We go to town together now. We're working on histories. We go to the temple when Versal feels well enough to sit.[29]

Unfortunately, a greater concern replaced worry about themselves as Deb, a new bride, underwent her traumatic, face-hearing-and-voice altering surgery in Texas.

Concern for Deb

On Friday, 17 Sept. 1982, Deb had her tumor surgery, this time at Bexar County Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. Incredibly, it was her worst yet! The day-long surgery to remove a regrowth of one of her carotid body tumors eight years earlier was extremely difficult as the tumor had gone into bone, tissue, and invaded her middle ear and Eustachian tube. The tumor clung to the old scar tissue making it a bugger to remove. The surgeon had to cut her facial nerve again. (It had been cut and spliced twice eight years earlier.) The prognosis for it's successful regrowth a third time was dim. The surgery also rendered her deaf in her right ear.

Deb had to have a tracheotomy for her throat swelled to where she couldn't breathe. Her recovery was miserable and lonely. With her previous surgeries in Salt Lake City, Mom, Dad and other family members had been able to sit with her in the hospital daily but in San Antonio she was isolated, except for Trey, whose vigilance was heroic but not constant.

Mom wrote three days following Deb's surgery:

Our tests are severe now. I yearn to go and at least be with suffering Deb. I, we, cried and cried today when we phoned her and found her out of the ICU (intensive care unit), but in her room with an unsympathetic nurse who said tersely: "Oh, she's doing fine. All her signs are good, but she's not very happy."

I asked where Trey was. The nurse replied: "Oh, he should be here later."

The nurse did give the phone to Deb and all she could do was whisper hoarsely, "Mom-Dad," and finally, "Bye." She tried to say something else, but failed.

We were distraught all day. Versal wanted me to fly to San Antonio to be with Deb — shes a very ill girl. But I'm afraid to leave Versal — he's not stable, we've had so many upsets: his heart attack, his sciatic arthritis attack, his almost hemorrhoid-like problems again. Just yesterday he had a 15-20 minute heart problem: tightness in his chest, heaviness in his arms, paleness. Then it passed, but left him so weak he only went to Sacrament meeting then came home to rest.

He feels guilty at keeping me here, says he felt — feels — useless."



Dad and two of his granddaughters, Heather Bird (daughter of Richard and Twila Davis Bird, who lived in Colorado) **and Christine Davis** (daughter of LaVel and Colleen Davis, who lived in Texas), 18 July 1982. They were two in his family of fifty at the time.

Fish #18

(Flashback, Journal II, p. 28, November 1982)

Yes, Dr. Nelson, I"11 be at the hospital the evening before the operation," I replied as I left the clinic office.

This was a result of a decision to have surgery on my lower back to hopefully relieve the pain and discomfort caused by a pinched nerve in my spinal column. This procedure was to take place on Nov. 4, 1982, a Thursday.

Only six days remained before my ordeal in the Logan Regional Hospital. I had desired to go fishing a few times before the legal season closed on Nov. 30. I wondered if the weather would be suitable the next Monday. I had appointments on all the other days so it had to be Monday or not at all.

"Let's plan on going next Monday then," Thelma suggested.

"Good, I'm glad you see it that way. We'll ask Duane and Melanie to join us," I hurriedly replied.

So, come Monday morning, I had prepared the boat, gathered fishing tackle, dug worms from the compost pit, gassed up the little red Toyota, and then said, "O.K. you guys, let's go."

The four of us headed for Condie Reservoir in southern Idaho. In Franklin, we stopped where Duane bought a one-day license, then we proceeded on to this beautiful reservoir nestled in the hills north and east of Preston. Fishing success had been very good all summer long. I hoped this would be no different.

The weather was somewhat cold but no storm seemed imminent. Upon arriving, we launched the boat with fishing gear, etc. We prepared our poles for trolling, after which, I started the five-horsepower motor.

In a short while Melanie said, "Something keeps jerking my line.

I watched her rod tip and sure enough, she was playing trout. "Keep your rod up and reel in real slow-like," I advised her.

She studiously did as I directed. This was her first fishing experience from a boat.

Well, our success continued until we had caught 17 fish. The temperature dropped during this time until it grew very cold.

"Dork, I'm chilled and so is Melanie. Let's go on in and call it a day," Thelma advised.

"I'd like to get one more to complete our limit, but I guess we had better load up and go home."

Upon reaching the boat dock, I stiffly arose and left the boat, taking my pole with me. My leg was pained a great deal as I walked up the bank of the reservoir.

"Duane, you back the boat trailer in the water. While you do that I'll try for that last fish." I addressed the group.

I staggered around the muddy point and stopped.



Dad in his beloved tin boat on Condie Reservoir, summer 1980.

From here I made a long cast toward the deeper section of the lake. I let the water-filled bobber and fly sink to the bottom, then I commenced to slowly reel the lure toward me.

Almost instantly, I hooked a fish. "Oh boy, number eighteen. I'll be careful with this one!" I so wanted to make this last fishing trip of the year a complete success.

Very carefully, I played this fish, loosening my line as much as possible. Slowly it began to come my way then I pulled it up the wet bank where I grasped it. It was the prize #18 and also the largest trout I have ever caught in Condie Reservoir! I went home happy.

An addition to this Flashback:

A few days before this fishing trip Duane and Melanie had returned from their three-month stint in Texas where he had been working for LaVel. They had moved in temporarily with Mom and Dad, while they looked for jobs and an apartment. Mom was grateful for their presence as she had not looked forward to being alone while Dad was hospitalized for his back surgery.[33]

Regarding the fishing trip, Mom made note of how uncharacteristic it was for Dad to relinquish supervision of loading the boat onto the trailer:

I was amazed, she wrote in her journal that night (1 Nov. 1982). *He's wistful. Always he'd taken full command of loading the boat, taking care of equipment, etc. . . . Chilled, Mel, Duane and I had been warming up in the pickup* [after the boat was loaded and Dad continued fishing]. *I noticed that several times Versal stopped and gazed out over his beloved Condie almost in benediction.*[34]

The following day she recorded:

Versal, surprisingly, slept the best last nite that he has in quite a while! And this morning Versal thanked me again for the lovely fishing trip he so much enjoyed yesterday. Happily, he put his old boat "to bed" for the winter. In our morning prayer he thanked our Heavenly Father for yesterday, then asked for strength and blessings to withstand the ordeal ahead.

. . . Back in Logan [after a trip to see his prostate specialist in Ogden for a routine checkup], *Versal and I went to the old stake center to vote in the govt. elections. We'd agreed to vote straight Republican this year to endorse Pres. Reagan's attempts to straighten out the terrible financial mess our govt. and economy are in.*

Tonight, at Versal's request, Lauris and Duane administered to Versal in preparation for Versal's upcoming back operation. Duane, Mel, Lauris and I were present.

Back Surgery

Versal was taken into surgery at 7:30 a.m., Mom wrote while attending Dad's recovery from back surgery at Logan Regional Hospital on 4 Nov. 1982. *I arrived here at 8:30. At 9:15 Dr. Nelson, in operating blues, came into Versal's room where I was waiting to report that the operation was finished; that Versal's heart had remained fine; that the poor sciatic nerve had been taking a terrific beating from an arthritic outgrowth on the disc; that he'd been able to successfully chip away the offending growth. He said much of Versal's spine shows arthritis. I asked about danger of recurrence of problems. He admitted that it was possible but not too likely. But he's sure the sciatic problem is solved![36]*

A few days later, Dad, confined to his bed following surgery wrote: *At this time I am resting in room #332 of the Logan Regional Hospital, preparatory to back surgery, which will take place about 8 a.m. tomorrow morning. I 've known for some time that this was pending because of the worsening condition of my right leg. This will be an expensive procedure but if it corrects the problem, then I will be grateful. Lauris and Duane administered to me last evening. It is wonderful that I can rely on my own sons for this purpose. In fact, I could call on any of the other three as well as my three sons-in-law. What more could one ask for?*

"This hospital stay will mark the 7th time [I've been hospitalized] within the last 15 months. The list includes: 1. Phoenix Good Samaritan Hospital for a hemorrhoidectomy, 2. Logan Hospital for a needle biopsy testing for prostate cancer, 3. St. Benedicts Hospital in Ogden for 34 radiation treatments for my prostate cancer, 4. Logan Hospital for a heart attack, 5. Logan Hospital for leg pain, 6. Logan Hospital for a myelogram testing for my back disorder, and 7. Logan Hospital for this back surgery.

Dad was back in the hospital yet again the following March (at Easter time), with an abscess on his tailbone that needed lancing. (He initially told Mom not to call family members: he felt it was inconsequential and he was embarrassed.[35]) And a few months later, in June, he was in Room #83 (5th floor, north wing) of LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City. But this time he was not the patient, Mom was!

The Table Turns

On 3 March 1983 Mom and Dad received a late night phone call from Branch President Bartlett and his wife from the Maricopa Indian Branch in Arizona. Dad was asleep; Mom fielded the call. They chatted leisurely about "our Indians" for about 45 minutes, then Pres. Bartlett asked if Dad's health would permit them to come back to work with them there — a second mission. Mom noted in her journal, *"I told them the truth,"* — she was doubtful of his ability to return to the hot, Phoenix area.

However, when Mom told Dad about the request the next morning, she said, *"He was excited and thrilled — he'll go if he's called. As he went Home Teaching with [Logan Stake] Pres. McAllister last Sun., Versal asked him about the possibility of our going back to the Maricopas. Pres. McAllister said he'd never heard of missionaries being called back to their exact same mission, but maybe this could be a first.*

I guess I'm the one of weak faith as I keep thinking of how Versal suffered there, how the heat seemed to devastate him. But I'd go with him — scared.[39]

Pres. Bartlett called again in late April to tell them the Red McMillan family Dad had baptized two years earlier (see p. 299) were to be sealed in the Mesa Temple, could they come participate?[40]

The phone call set many gears in motion. A few days later Mom wrote in her journal:

We'll give Versal's travelability another test next week. After several calls from Pres. and Sis. Bartlett in Phoenix, we've promised to drive down to attend the Mesa Temple sealings of 2 Indian families: the Red McMillans (whom Versal baptized) and the LaFrancis family. The Bartletts are really trying to get us back there at Maricopa Colony as missionaries again; Versal is eager and willing to go back there. Maybe by fall — if he continues to improve — we'll finally be able to go on our other mission.

Anyway, if Versal manages this Phoenix trip OK, we'll fly to Texas in mid-May with Vel in his plane; [visit his family in Georgetown and Deb in nearby Austin] *then*

Mesa Temple, 5 May 1983. The group from the Maricopa Branch who attended the temple sealing of the Hensel (Red) McMillan Family. The McMillans are at the lower right: Rae Jean Sundust McMillan (11), Lennidine Yaramata Sundust McMillan holding Delora McMillan (4), Jacinda McMillan (hiding, age 2), and Hensel (Red) McMillan holding baby Keena Lee McMillan. Those who accompanied the McMillan family to the temple are: Elder & Sister Watkins (back row left), the missionaries who replaced Mom and Dad, and Branch President and Sister Bartlett (back row right). Mom and Dad are seated at the lower left.



by 1st June we'll use Vel's car to drive Colleen and her kids back to Utah via Lakewood, Colorado [to visit Twila and family]. *Then — Versal still hopes — we'll head to Alaska for 6 weeks. He and Duane have our pickup all overhauled and perking fine; the lure of Alaska never left Versal, even when he was hurting the worst he planned and prepared!*[41]

Dad fared the traveling well, in fact, *"He feels the best he has in 2 years,"* Mom wrote when they returned.[42] But Mom had an inkling something was seriously wrong — not with him, but with herself!

While at our house in Colorado, she confided to me she had been "spotting" but downplayed her anxiety. (I'm sure she felt our "plate was full" with Richard's declining health and didn't want to add to it.) But she was concerned enough to seek a priesthood blessing as soon as they returned to Logan.

On Sunday, 12 June 1983, family members gathered at their home for the solemn occasion. Duane offered a family prayer, Brian (who had just moved back to Utah from Washington) anointed Mom; Dad sealed the anointing and gave her a tearful blessing. A few days later Mom wrote:

Last Sun. morning (12 June) Versal, Brian and Duane administered to me. This is only the 2nd time in my life — that I know of — that I've received this blessing. I've been so exceptionally blessed with good health and a strong body even as my Patriarchal Blessing promised: ." . . . I bless you with health and strength, both of body and mind that you may live long upon the earth and become a noble mother in Israel .. . "

My first blessing was when I was not quite 3 years old. We were living on a dry farm at Lamont, Ida. I was instantly, miraculously healed from the effects of drinking some paint thinner. My father administered to me alone as we were far from neighbors or help.[43] (See note #43 in "Chapter Notes" for the account of her first healing blessing.)

Uterine Cancer!

(Mom's journal, 23 June 1983)

Life slips by so fast! My — our lives have made a dramatic 45-degree turn in the past 2 days: a most humbling, testing turn!

At first I thot and hoped that my bleeding would simply stop — just go away. Several times it did, only to start again with renewed vigor. For quite some time heat has bothered me, but I began to have distinct hot flashes, so much so that even my glasses would fog up. My new glasses. My vision had become more and more blurry, so I had my eyes tested and got new, stronger lenses — but they didn't help much. So, at last, at Versal's urging, I phoned Dr. Merrill Daines, who promptly, via phone, referred me to a gynecologist, Dr. Neal Mortenson. I knew in my heart I'd have to have a hysterectomy.

. . . Anyway, Dr. Mortenson promptly did a D&C on me (dilation and curettement) to see what was amiss in my uterus. That isn't a pleasant $300 experience! But it would have cost 3 times that much to have it done under anesthesia in the hospital. The diagnosis was somber: tumors, maybe cancer. I was full of blood clots containing tissue. Dr. Mortenson assured us that hysterectomies were fairly routine — that he hadn't lost a patient in over 20 years; that my health was otherwise excellent. Prepare for operation about 4 p.m. tomorrow. Get blood testing done at the hospital. I did.

Then the roof fell in! I'd been uptown buying for me a new, pretty, cool bathrobe. When I arrived home, I was met by a distraught, tearful Versal. He hugged and hugged me and we both cried: I have a very fast-spreading, often fatal, rare form of cancer — in fact 2 types. Dr. Mortensen counseled us kindly but honestly. He made immediate appointments with 2 specialists at the L.D.S. Hospital in S.L.

We leave here at noon. I have to check in at 2. There will be an operation tomorrow. Dr. Mortenson says they'll remove all my female organs. Then they'll probably go to radiation full-scale. But twice he said this is often fatal.

Versal is so tender, concerned, loving — he's suffered so much the last 2 years that he has great empathy.

The Post-Op Report

(Dad's journal, written in the hospital, 24 June 1983)

I've just received sobering news about Mom!!! The doctor indicated that her problem was extremely serious. The malignancy had spread a great deal beyond the organ itself. Her chances for complete recovery, which will involve chemotherapy [but no radiation], is about 20%. . How am I going to disclose this to her? I pray to God that He will bless her.

Facing Mortality

(Mom's journal, 1 Aug. 1983)

My journal writing becomes more and more erratic! Most of the time I feel quite well — oh, I have some problems: ringing in my ears (sometimes); weak and faulty bowel signals and some diarrhea; hurting in my kidneys if I sit 3 hrs. in Church or ride too long sitting up. And, of course, I tire quite easily.

But when I think of Drs. Johnson and Smith and Neal Mortenson's prognosis [an 80% chance she would not recover], I would be devastated if I did not, each time quickly think of the blessing given me by Versal, Duane, and Brian with its promise that I would recover from this ailment to yet serve the Lord here.

And Versal is so helpful, loving and empathetic. We've never been closer. Our perspective has changed. We often talk of the Spirit World and what it'll be like there.

Twila said when she was here: "I think a lot differently about death than I did five years ago!" But, even so, she'll never completely understand Richard's thinking, as he steadily fails, until she herself knows her own life is in peril.

Yesterday I came home from Church hurting



so that I couldn't eat dinner with Versal. He was so concerned that he later retreated to the bedroom ostensibly to rest, but he came out a little later and he'd been crying. Hugging me he assured me again and again that my welfare is his paramount concern — that it far supercedes our Alaska trip. He will not go if it jeopardizes me; he wants me to tell the doctors of each of my ailments and seek their help. I will. But I know my recovery is far more in God's hands than in Dr. Johnson's or Dr. Smith's.

Alaska Again — Almost!

(Dad's journal, 3 Oct. 1983)

It has been three months since I wrote my last entry in this journal. Much has happened and, no doubt, I will probably omit some important events.

Before Thelma was released from the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City she was given a 3-day battery of chemotherapy injections. These were the first of several which will be given to her at 6 week intervals. These are not supposed to cause very much discomfort; however, recent experience has proven that considerable weakness occurs as does a 2 or 3 day period of semi-incontinence. But Thelma seems to withstand the periodic ordeal and does seem to be responding favorably at this time. I dread each week long ordeal but if she can obtain some relief and maintain an otherwise normal lifestyle, then we both will be very grateful.

The family has been very considerate of her (and me) in many ways. This concern lifts our hearts a great deal. Many friends and associates from all over have also visited, written or phoned.

The doctors told her to resume a normal lifestyle when she got home. They even recommended that our proposed Canada-Alaska trip could be undertaken. So with this in mind, I worked a great deal at Ace Mill and earned over $600.00 which I saved to help pay expenses of the trip.

. . . We finally left for Sugar-Salem on a Saturday, Aug. 20 [to join with lifelong friends Wendell and Fern Virgin for the trip to Alaska]. We drove our little Dodge Colt up there and then unloaded our personal gear into the pickup camper which the Virgins had. We then spent Sunday in St. Anthony and attended church there.

Our trip did not involve going to Alaska as we had previously planned. . . Thelma responded very well and could have gone on but Fern had some physical difficulty and so we cut the trip short. We did enjoy our 2 weeks of traveling together, though. We saw beautiful country in British Columbia and also in northern Washington.

[Mom and Dad's shortened-but-enjoyable northern excursion extended from 22 Aug. - 3 Sept. 1983.]

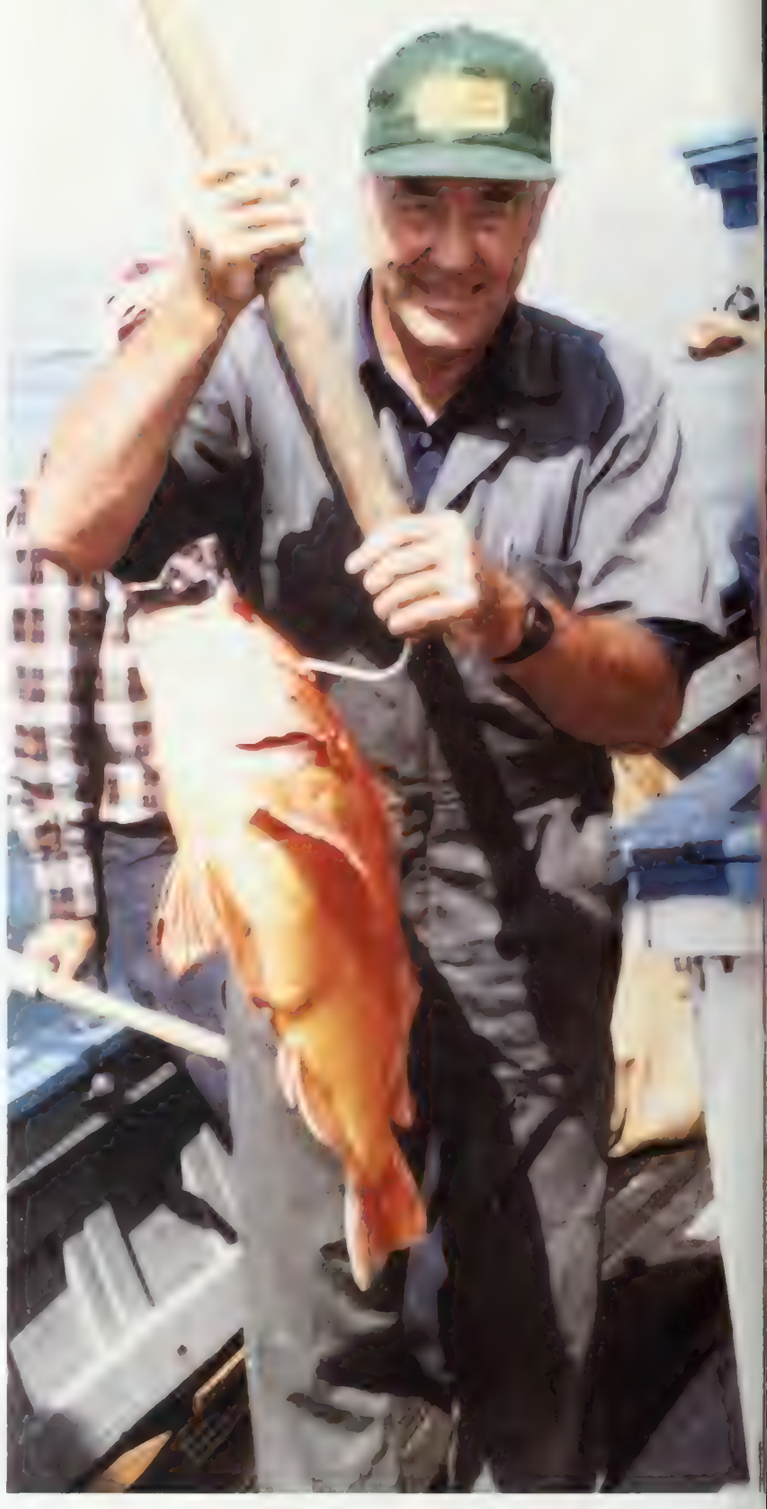


Left: **Mom and Dad on the Seattle Temple grounds,** 26 Aug. 1983, two months following Mom's hysterectomy. This photo was taken during their trip with the Virgins.

Right: **Fellow travelers Fern & Wendell Virgin and Mom & Dad,** 22 Aug. 1983, as they were ready to leave for Alaska. They traveled for two weeks (3,000 miles) comfortably and enjoyed portions of British Columbia but turned back before reaching Alaska when Fern developed some physical problems.[44]

Thurs. 25 Aug. 1983. **Dad and a nice, red snapper,** which Mom said looked like an overgrown goldfish

One of the highlights of the Canadian trip for Dad was ocean-bottom fishing in the Pacific Ocean. Dad and Wendell Virgin were joined by Brent and his son, Allan, for a day's outing off the coast of Geribaldi, Oregon. All four caught their limits.



Does Sea Sickness Help?

(Flashback 1983)

On a fishing trip in 1983 I was on a bottom-fishing boat off the coast of Garibaldi, Oregon. Brent, Allan [his son], and Wendell Virgin were with me in our quest for red snapper, sea bass, ling cod and other bottom fish.

Our luck was very good as we all limited out. But, how we did this is the subject of this story:

All of us obeyed the skipper's instructions in baiting our hooks, lowering the same, and then hooking and reeling in.

But one of our group of nine [five were in another fishing party] became very seasick. It was Wendell!

All of us caught several fish but who caught the most? Yes, it was Wendell! Repeatedly, he caught three fish at a time while the rest brought up singles.

Why should this be? Was it luck? Was it proficiency? Or, was he doing something differently because of his stomach? I hope I never get seasick just to find out.

Mom's P.S. to Wendell's fishing success: *Wendell was the only one who got seasick, but that didn't stop him; he wants to go ocean fishing again someday. All of the fish were filleted, but we had to leave them stored in Brent's locker. We couldn't possibly take them on north with us.*

Ocean Fishing

(Flashback. Journal II. p. 127)

During the latter years, while working at Ace Mill & Fixture Co., I was privileged to join fellow employees in going to the Oregon-Washington coast for salmon fishing. There were usually fifteen-to-twenty people involved and so we were able to remain a body as we rented a fishing boat. These boats are not large and, therefore, are susceptible to considerable rocking to and fro. This caused considerable sea-sickness among many of the men and women on board. Fortunately, this problem has never assailed me yet and I'm very grateful.

But, sick or not, all fished. Our success was sometimes fair, sometimes good and other times great. We caught many salmon of various kinds and sizes. Also we collected other fish: ling cod, herring, red snapper, sea bass, sea trout, sand sharks and once a blue shark.

The competition was keen and the comradery was superb. We usually spent two days fishing. Many times, however, many of the employees would remain on dry land the second day.

As the years have gone by I have taken several of these trips and have been joined by various members of the family. Brent has been with me several times as



Ev Harris, Dad's "boss" at Ace Mill, with a nice ling cod caught during one of the shop's deep sea fishing trips, 1984. A fellow Logan First Ward member, Ev served as our bishop for many years.

as Thelma, Duane, Debbie, and Corrette.

Many times we have taken several large fish back to Logan. These trips are quite expensive but they are a big change from the regular at-home sort of trip.

One year Brent, Mom and I elected to bottom fish instead of trolling for salmon. This proved to be an interesting experience as we caught huge ling cod, bright red snappers and delicious sea bass. In fact, we grew weary while reeling these up to the surface. We had been still-fishing, near the bottom, one hundred to two hundred feet down.

I have become so interested in this sport that I now own my own rod and reel designed for ocean fishing.

LaVel's Heart Attack

After their return from their Canadian trip with the Virgins, Dad immediately tackled a long-overdue project — painting the outside of their home. The Saturday after their return, 10 Sept. 1983, the fix-up began under Dad's supervision: Lauris hauled away a big stack of old wood from behind the garage; Duane and Lauris, using a water-pressure gun and elbow grease, sprayed and scraped old, loose paint off the house and garage; Tami's husband, John, masked the windows; Brian, meanwhile, mowed the lush, heavy lawn. Mom happily fed the large, hungry work crew and they returned, exhausted, to their own homes.[46]

The next evening Mom and Dad received a desperate phone call from distraught Colleen in Texas. LaVel, only 45, had had a heart attack! Mom's journal is filled with phone notes recording LaVel's almost hourly progress as reported by Colleen and Deb. LaVel underwent a battery of tests and three changes of hospitals before surgery was finally scheduled. He also arranged his business affairs and made out his will — just in case.

Calm, steady Merle Olsen, Colleen's mother, flew to Texas to salve her daughter's frayed nerves and help with the children. Deb called her a "leveling agent" — that "when LaVel is around her, he's more quiet and agreeable."[47] She said, "Merle is a lifesaver here. She's so diplomatic, sweet, helpful, and kind! I'm so glad she's here."[48]

Though Merle was there to give support, LaVel willed Mom and Dad there, too. Deb reported that when he was being loaded onto a Medivac helicopter for transport to Audie Murphy Veteran's Hospital in San Antonio, he said, "My Mom and Dad are coming. I know they are coming."

Colleen responded, "But they aren't; they haven't planned to come. They're not well enough." To which LaVel replied, "I don't care! I know they're coming."[49]

Neither LaVel nor Colleen knew that Mom and Dad were already on their way, driving Deb's old car

dubbed, "Newton J. Figg," for the exhausting 1500-mile, three-day journey to Texas. Tami, concerned for her parents, traveled with them. They arrived the night before LaVel's open heart, quadruple bi-pass surgery on 21 Sept. 1983 and stayed for four days. When they were reassured of his recovery, they journeyed back home, stopping in Salt Lake on their way to begin Mom's third round of chemo shots for her cancer. They arrived back in Logan on 29 Sept., exhausted but relieved.[5]



10 Sept. 1983. **Duane uses a rented water-pressure gun to remove loose paint from the front of Mom and Dad's Logan home.** Note the pock marks from holes, which had been bored the previous winter to blow much needed insulation into the walls of the drafty, old house.

Dad and the boys (Lauris and Duane) were able to get the house half-painted before poor weather forced Dad to put away the paint equipment until the following spring.[51]

They also insulated the attic. Mom wrote on Saturday, 8 Oct. 1983: *Best of all was having our 2 look-alike, buddy sons come and spend a couple of hours blowing cellulose insulation into our attic. Lauris and Duane play together and work together well. Today they chatted happily as they worked here. They blew in 590 (14 bags) of insulation. A year ago when we had our walls insulated, the company had cited us a cost of $500.00 for that attic.*

Therapy Trip

Dad, not Mom, was the one who felt crummy as 1984 got underway. He had what the doctor called "hot spots" of arthritis up and down his spine and took numerous aspirin daily to combat the pain. Mom said his arthritis nagged him at every move and the continuous cold and fog of Cache Valley's deep winter kept him homebound. They decided a change of scenery might do him good.

"Versal and I packed our big suitcase for our 2-week trip to Texas — our therapy trip, Mom wrote in her journal on 14 Feb. 1984. *We're hoping the trip will alleviate V's arthritic pains in his upper back and chest. Vel has been urging us to come down "where it is warm" all winter as Versal has suffered.*[53]

Before going to the airport they stopped by Mom's doctor's office in Salt Lake for her to have a routine exam. It had been six months since her surgery. She felt well and her vitals were good but when Dr. Johnson, her cancer specialist, did an internal exam, he mumbled something about: "I see a piece of something . . . going to get a clip of it. It'll hurt a bit, bleed a bit, better make a few tests."[54] Naturally, Mom and Dad were apprehensive but since there was nothing to be done but wait, they continued on to Texas.

It was a beautiful, clear day, with the rugged, white-covered Rockies far below as they began their Delta flight to Dallas. Mom and Dad both dozed. In her journal that night Mom wrote:

After we awoke, a stewardess came and sat down by me. Smiling she said, "May I ask you a question? How long have you two been married?"

I replied, "47 years."

She was delighted: "Ah! That restores my faith in marriage! You two looked so peaceful sleeping there side by side,

holding hands — I was so tempted to take your picture. I've been married 6 years and I so much want my marriage to last like that! Where do you live? Do you have children?"

A little later Versal went to the back of the plane to the restroom. As he passed this same stewardess, who was now talking to another man, she exclaimed, "Now here is the man I was telling you about — he's been married 47 years . . . "[57]

Mom and Dad spent two weeks visiting Trey & Deb, in Austin, and LaVel & Colleen, in Georgetown. They spent several days during their Texas stay doing some genealogical sleuthing relative to Trey's Czechoslovakian ancestry.

After about a week of being among "our Texans" Mom noted Dad's arthritis had not improved in spite of the warmer weather and sunshine. But he did get outdoors a lot, expecially on wells with LaVel, and got a nice tan.[56]

Nevertheless, we are on this earth to be tested and the tests are really here! Mom wrote on 22 Feb. 1984. *Versal and I are in the midst of very serious health tests for the first time in our lives. We 2 have had so many ailments the past 2½ years . . . all of his, and now mine. Right now Versal is so bugged by his aching arthritis, and his activities are limited by his heart and weakness. And, tho I feel well, I'm apprehensive of the possibility of another operation for my abdominal cancer. Dr. Johnson must have seen something amiss for he took a Pabst smear and 2 tissue samples from my vagina [during her routine 6-month exam].*"

A New "Normal"

Back in Logan Mom and Dad tried to settle back into some kind of normal routine, but "normal" for them had changed. Dad's back and side hurt so much he simply didn't do much more than endure the pain. One night he couldn't find his bottle of aspirins so finally, in desperation, he resorted to taking two pain pills — he'd avoided them before. The next morning he sighed, "That's the first time I've been without pain for months — the first time! Ah! It feels so good!"[58]

And Mom was afraid he had full-fledged diabetes for he was endlessly thirsty and drank constantly. He craved "pop" and kept a supply in the frige. Mom begged him to see the doctor about the diabetes issue; he said he would as soon as her ordeal was over.[59]

They thought Mom's "ordeal" would be another cancer surgery. Yes, her cancer had returned. But her doctor decided to spot radiate the growth rather than remove it. Mom was hospitalized for the radiation treatment for three days, March 13-15.[60]

As for his own problems, at Dad's next routine checkup his doctor prescribed diabetes medication — time to begin serious treatment for yet another worsening health concern. Mom and Dad read through the diabetes information booklet Dr. Daines had given them and she noted:



Sunday, 26 Feb. 1984. **Dad, Mom, Deb and baby Rachel in Trey and Deb's Austin kitchen.** A fierce competitor, Trey had whopped Mom and Dad in playing the LDS game, "Seek." Then he tried to teach them the science of playing dominoes, the state game of Texas. Regular tournaments are held and state champions declared. Trey and his grandfather Nelson played dominoes a lot. Mom wrote [illegible] *Rachel just plays with everything* [illegible] *train.*"

Finally it was realized that he has all the symptoms [of diabetes]: *weakness, endless thirst, greatly increased urination; numbness in hands and legs, weight loss, diabetes in close family members.*

For the past 3 years Versal has had so many exams by so many doctors. All have said that he was a borderline diabetic, to just be careful of his diet. He has! But apparently this past 6 months, part of his affliction has been diabetes.

Since Versal has been taking that [diabetes] *pill (1 wk.) he feels distinctly stronger. His never-ending thirst has slackened dramatically, also his urination. He still has a lot of numbness in both legs. We're so hopeful that we can finally get him feeling better! But we know he's suffering from multiple afflictions: heart trouble which really "talks to him" when he overexerts; his arthritis which has, as before, really bugged him and finally erupted into hemorrhoids! And now diabetes which has certainly been worsening for some months.*

We had him administered to last Sunday.[62]

At Odds Over Alaska

Dad could see his plans for yet another Alaska trip, planned for late summer 1984, going down the drain. Mom penned on her calendar in the square for Sunday, 25 March, 1984: *V morbid, grieving about going to Alaska — again. My patience is pretty thin.*

Mom had supported (tolerated) Dad's obsession with Alaska for many years but now that they were both very ill, she couldn't see the point anymore. The ever-present endeavor sapped so many of their resources: money, at a time when medical bills were pouring in; energy, which neither of them had; and time, an increasingly precious commodity at this point in their lives. But most of all Mom worried about Dad's physical ability (and probably her own) to undertake more extensive traveling.

Another of her calendar notes, this one on June 17, further reveals Mom's frustration with his Alaska bewitchment:

Father's Day. But a bust here. V fussing abt getting away to Alaska before Sept. I guess I get tired of the forever-Alaska bit! No Ch [church]. No dinner. No compromises. I had to change Davis Fam. reunion date to July 26, 27, 28 to free Aug. V. mollified, but still angry. I get hurt always playing 2nd to Alaska.[63]

However, the day after their heated Father's Day argument Mom did an abrupt about-face. In her journal she explained why:

. . . Sun. was a bad one for us. Versal is in almost constant pain all around his torso with his arthritis. Getting out and going is a relief, a distraction for him. Anyway, Sun. I made an indiscreet statement about going to Alaska and he went all to pieces. So, no Church, just to bed. I've felt the Alaska-bit is too much for his strength.

But as I talked to Roxy Marshall as we sorted cloth at D.I. [Deseret Industries, where Mom served as a Homecraft supervisor each Monday], *she wisely counselled me: "Shut up and go! Help him do the things he loves! You're over-cautious! So what if he should go out there* [die while traveling] *— far better than in a darned hospital!" And well she should know as she's just retired from a nursing career, and seen much suffering.*

Versal and I have made our peace.[65]

So the Alaska planning continued, with Mom on board; she kept her fears to herself from this point forward.

In his journal Dad admitted his desire to go *"north to Canada and Alaska has become almost an obsession"*[66] . He also recognized his health risks for he outlined them carefully in a journal entry written on 12 Aug. 1984, a week before their scheduled departure:

I suppose I should write somewhat concerning my health at this time. I have experienced a great deal of discomfort in recent months. I hesitate to enumerate the various problems which I have but perhaps I should list them for your knowledge:

1. My weakened heart condition, which I've learned to live with by restraining from excessive physical effort. I do have spasms of angina but I have managed.

2. Since my hemorrhoids operation, while in Arizona [as a missionary], *I have had constant irritation in respect to this area. I have to diet and eat very carefully.*

3. I have, apparently, a very bad arthritic back, which causes a great deal of pain in my right side. This is done by pinching of nerves in the back area. Pain medication is my only respite.

4. Since my radiation treatments of 2 years ago I have had constant weakness and distress in the area of treatment, the prostate area.

5. About 6 weeks ago my doctor determined that I am diabetic. As a result I am using medication (pills) to treat this.

All of these present problems I constantly have to deal with but I do manage most of the time. However, occasions

do arise when I am at a loss as to what to do. For instance, Thelma and I are scheduled to join the Virgins on Aug. 20 for a long trip to Canada-Alaska. At this time, Aug. 12, I am having considerable pain in the prostate area. The question is "Should I cancel the trip or not?" I wish very much to go but perhaps it may be foolish. I'm on a wait-and-see plan at this point. I honestly feel that I will never be able to take such a trip again.[67]

Dad's consuming desire to go to Alaska trumped his nagging fear of the consequences. He and Mom, in companionship with Wendell and Fern Virgin (with whom they had shared a shortened Alaska trip the previous summer), spent 3½ weeks sightseeing in the northern regions which bewitched him so. (A summary of their travels is outlined in Chapter 8.)

When they returned — when the stark reality of Mom's terminal illness once again consumed their waking moments — Dad expressed his indebtedness for her sacrifice in his behalf in his journal: *Thelma was somewhat reluctant to go but we finally decided to do so and from that time forth she never complained a bit. I'll be forever grateful to her.*"

They returned from their Alaska trip on 14 Sept. 1984. Mom had surgery two weeks later on the 28th.

(For further discussion on the tug-and-pull between Mom and Dad regarding the Alaska issue, see the article titled "Compromise" in Chapter 13 on p. 398.)

Mom, looking pale, drawn, and thinner than normal, in British Colombia, Sept. 1984.



Mom's Final Surgery

At 7:30 a.m. on 28 Sept. 1984, Mom was wheeled into an operating room at L.D.S. Hospital in Salt Lake City. When they wheeled her back out again at 4:00 in the afternoon, the doctors told Dad her prognosis was not good, that she had been filled with cancer. Though not surprised, the news was a blow.

Dad prepared for Mom's two-week hospital vigil by paying a $2/day fee and parking his camper in the hospital parking lot. Visiting hours were from noon to 8 p.m. and he was at Mom's side every permissable minute. Between times he retreated to the camper. He wrote in his journal the camper *"affords me a private place to be where I can rest and also be by myself. I need this seclusion at a time like this."*[69]

Mom didn't feel well enough to converse at length most of the time — she was groggy and in pain —but she appreciated the short visits, phone calls, flowers, and notes from family and friends. Dad, who was tense and worried, may have received more benefit from well-wishers than Mom. A week into her hospital ordeal he wrote:

The days have been long and pensive. Had I been alone all this time I don't know how I would have managed. But family has checked in or telephoned every day. I can't help but think how difficult it would be if one, such as I , had no family or close friends at a time such as now.[70]

Of course, everyone was worried about Dad, too. For several years his poor health had concerned all of us. But he seemed to receive extra endurance when he needed it. He recorded:

Mom and the kids keep asking about how I feel at this stressful time. I have my usual aches and pains but nothing unusual or serious afflicts me at present. Anyway, it seems ridiculous to think of my own problems when I'm much more concerned about some so near and dear to me.[71]

President Hinckley's Visit

The night before Mom was released a special event took place which pleased her (and Dad) a great deal:

I was watching people come and go as they traversed the long hallway near Thelma's hospital room, Dad wrote in his journal on Nov. 1. *I saw and recognized Pres.* [Gordon B.] *Hinckley as he walked down the corridor away from me. I called to him and he promptly stopped and turned toward me. I introduced myself and then asked if he would visit Thelma for a short while. He very quickly and courteously accepted and asked where she was. I led him to her room where she was so pleased to meet him. He talked to her a short time, bid her well, and then left. Mom was very elated! Incidentally, Pres. Hinckley's wife was in the hospital having had abdominal surgery. Like me, he had been crying as well.*[72]

At Home With Mom

(Twila's journal, 9 Jan. 1985)

I'm in Logan visiting Mom and Dad for 10 days. Raquelle and Tiffany are with me. Trisha is back in Lakewood taking care of Rich and the two little ones. The kids have another week and a half of winter vacation before they return to school.

Mom is very ill, but comfortable. Her physical appearance has changed drastically since I saw her last (when they visited us in August at the time of Travis' baptism. [The photo of Mom and Dad at the beginning of this chapter was taken at that time.]). She has lost almost 50 pounds, is very thin and drawn. Mom bears an amazing resemblance to Grandma Hall during her last years. Mom's not in any pain right now and the doctors seem to think she won't be as her cancer progresses. They say she'll just slowly waste away — grow weaker and weaker. [Unfortunately, the doctors were wrong. Mom required pain medication not long after my visit.]

. . . Dad is so tenderly caring with Mom. He anticipates and meets her smallest needs. They're very close and loving. What a great comfort they are to each other. I'm so grateful for the love they share — and extend to us.

Logan, Ut.
Sat. 10 Nov. 1984
10 a.m.

It is been a long time since I've actually written in my journal and so much has happened! Just 2 weeks after our return from our Alaska Trip - our last - I was in the L.D.S. Hospital in S.L. again. The "little tumor" on my vagina was just the tip - of the - iceberg. Drs. Smith and Johnson removed 3 ft. of my lower intestine - almost plugged by cancer. They took out cancer from under my stomach. They did what they could, but the prognosis is terminal cancer!

This operation was much more debilitating than the 1st. Del flew home from Texas to lovingly care for me and my wide - open stomach - slit for 2 weeks. She was a superb nurse + she scrubbed and waxed and cleaned all thru the house. She made drapes for my bedroom and moved furniture around.

While we were at the hospital, Duane and Mel had brot their little TV over, installed it in our bedroom and moved an easy chair in there for my comfort.

After Del left, Jackie, with Michelle came to help a week. She's so sweet and kind and such good company.

Company! I've been amazed and humbled at the number of letters, cards, plants, flowers, and visitors we've had! And they keep coming. Yesterday, for instance: Verna Claire Eschleman came. While she was still here, Wally (who really isn't well at all [heart]) and Treva came. Before they left, Thora Norton arrived, then Duane Jensen to show us the beautiful carved-wood name plaque he'd made. We're to take it to Pres. Gordon and Hinckley in S.L. next week.



A page from Mom's Personal Journal, 10 Nov. 1984.

Photo: **Mom, in Oct. 1983,** engaged in the activity she focused on most during her final months — journal and family history writing.

Dad took this photograph of Mom, with her hair fresh out of rollers — before it had been brushed and styled. Knowing Dad, he may have purposely caught her at this moment — a typical one — so absorbed in her writing she had forgotten all about her hair, which she had begun fixing earlier.

As is highly evident in this book, Mom was a dedicated record keeper. She meticulously documented not only her own daily activities but recorded insights into the lives of all family members. And her ancestral research and records, which she carefully organized and left for us, are priceless. During her last year Mom spent portions of most days chronicling her childhood and the story of her parents during her youth. She got as far as her high school graduation then became too weak to go further. After her death, Dad completed her history to the time of their marriage.

Mom wrote in her carefully crafted script until she physically couldn't write anymore, but even then, with help, she continued documenting. Dad said:

Mom had promised that she would complete the research [for Ward and Stake Relief Society histories she had been asked to compile]. She could not at this time [a few months before her death] write very well so I provided cassette tapes upon which she narrated the record. These tapes were then given to Edward, who very quickly transposed them, by computer, on paper. The record was supreme and now is kept by the Logan Stake R.S. Presidency. This was Mom's last major contribution. Earlier [during]

Mom's Decline

(Dad's journal. Vol. III. p. 79. 10 Feb. 1985)

It is now 2:00 a.m. and I have been unable to sleep properly. Mom has had some distress and it causes me to be uptight.

Her condition is matching the prediction given by Dr. Johnson as he conferred with me following her operation in September. He said "I'm quite sure we can get her over the holidays (Thanksgiving and Christmas) then she will waste away and last for maybe four or five months."

She seems to be on course at this time. She experiences little pain but I notice that she is becoming weaker and has lost even more weight. She cannot adjust to any constant eating habit and therefore finding suitable food is difficult.

But her spirit is tremendous as she tries to be as normal as she can. Her determination to be self-sufficient is incredible. I've know her for over a half century and I've never seen her exhibit so much upbuilding, positive attitude as she has done in the past few weeks. I love her more at this time than I ever felt possible.

She has not been to church for several weeks and I doubt that her deteriorating condition will change that. But we do study together and many neighbors and friends come to see her.

The family has been constantly in touch by telephone or by actually visiting.

Malignancy in Dad's Hip

(Dad's journal. Vol. III. p. 82. 28 Feb. 1985)

My own health is problematical at this time. I have experienced increased angina this past month. I suppose the mental stress is partly to blame. The yearly bone scan that I take each year since my radiation treatments has evidently indicated that I have some bone cancer of the right hip. I don't know how serious this is or may become but I am not going to worry about it at this time. At my next appointment in May, I will discuss the situation with the doctor at that time. I'm quite certain that I will refuse extensive treatment. It would be unwise when one considers that I am afflicted with so many other physical problems such as a faltering heart, diabetes, arthritis of the back, and semi-numbness of both legs. But I shall consider as time goes by. Frankly, I don't want to remain alone for very long after Mom has left. I'd much rather be with her. This waiting is traumatic!!! I love her so much !!





Top photo: **Dad and his five sons,** 3 Feb. 1985. Back: Duane, Lauris, Brent. Front: LaVel, Dad, Brian.

In the forepart of February all five Davis sons converged to visit Mom. Dad wrote: *It was special that each could visit their mother at a time when she was yet very responsive. She was experiencing some bodily impairment but her mind was very much alive. This was Brent's last opportunity to converse with Mom and so it was very special. He remained for 2 days and then returned to Washington to honor a new job opportunity. LaVel remained for about a week after which he and Colleen drove back to Texas."*

Bottom photo: **Duane and LaVel** prepare to give Duane's three-wheeler and four-wheeler a spin around the neighborhood, 3 Feb. 1985. Logan's weather during the family gathering was bleak and depressing — snowy, foggy, and bitter cold, well below zero. On her calendar note for 1 Feb. Mom wrote: *Ian can't come from Ida. Falls -40 degrees and cars won't start. Can't get our AMC to go either. -70 degrees at Sinks in Logan Canyon.*

Compassionate Care

(Twila's journal, 14 March 1985)

I called Mom and Dad last night. Mom's declining steadily now. She's getting weaker and weaker — spends most of her time in bed. Her doctor has taken her completely off all of her cancer medication. She's only taking a few pain pills now. I guess there's really no point in having her suffer the side effects of the cancer drugs when there's no hope of them helping her. Mom says she's much more comfortable now. I'm happy for that.

Dad says some friends have loaned them a hospital bed. It's in the living room so Mom can use it during the day and visit with friends and family as they come and go. And, according to Mom, there's still a steady stream of visitors. She says they always feel compelled to bring something, usually food. She's grateful there are more living there at home now to eat it all.

Duane and Melanie moved in with Mom and Dad two weeks ago. I'm sure it's reassuring to have them there. Duane is relieving Dad of some of the heavier household chores such as taking care of the furnace and shoveling snow.

Deb is there now, too. She arrived from Texas a few days ago. She'll be Mom's constant nurse. She brought little Rachel with her. Trey, apparently, is leaving for Czechoslovakia (had to look up the spelling) to do some genealogical research right away.

I'll go over to Logan for a week while the kids are on spring break here. I'll go alone. The older kids will need to be here to help Rich and Logan just isn't a good place to take the younger ones right now.

I feel so deeply sad as I see Mom and Dad slipping away!

[Tami, who lived in Idaho Falls at the time, also came down to Logan when she could for extended visits to help Mom.]

Mom's Passing

(Twila's Journal, Thursday, 28 March 1985)

Mom died last night!! What a wrenching, beautiful experience! My heart is so full of pain at her passing, relief for her final peace, and burning with a testimony of life beyond death.

Mom developed pneumonia yesterday morning; that was to be one of her biggest struggles. As her lungs filled with fluid, even though she was heavily sedated, she began to panic. She would fight her way to consciousness to try to breathe better. Oh, the wrenching pain to watch her struggle! All through the day her breathing was labored, raspy and painful.

Mom was more alert yesterday than the day before. She would squeeze the hand of the person who talked to her in response to questions. However, she couldn't talk. Twice when Dad leaned over to express his love, she had tears well up in her closed eyes and roll down her cheeks.

[Family members present included LaVel and his daughters: Corrette, Lynette, and Laureen; Lauris and Dorothy; Trey and Deb; Duane and Melanie; Tami, Dad and myself. Brian and Jackie arrived later.] We were all fasting in preparation for a family prayer to petition the Lord for her release and the accompanying priesthood ordinance designated for that evening.

I was having a hard time coping with Mom's struggle breathing. I volunteered to go home and make preparations for the evening meal when we would break our fast. It was good therapy for me to be busy. . . Six o'clock was the time designated to break our fast. About fifteen minutes later [after we had begun eating] Dad called from the hospital. He simply said, "If you want to see Mom before she goes, come now!"

Mom's vital signs had gone crazy. Her blood pressure was 50/0, her pulse rate was 162, and her temperature was 101 degrees. She was slipping fast.

We gathered around her bed, all except Brian, who had not yet arrived. We knew the time was close. We decided to wait until Brian and Jackie came to have a family prayer. As soon as they did, we circled her bed and Dad voiced the prayer.

[An hour later] Everyone had left the room and were waiting down the hall on some sofas except Deb, Jackie, and me. I noticed Mom's breathing becoming more shallow. The rasping subsided. She was relaxing. I called for Dad. The others followed. She simply faded away slowly, and as Dad put his arms around her to kiss her goodbye, she opened her eyes and smiled — her first smile for days. Then she was gone.

Thelma Is Gone

(Dad's journal. Vol. III. Friday, 29 March 1985)

This entry is the most sobering of any I have ever made or that I probably ever shall have written. Mom's book of life finally closed at about 9:00 p.m. last Wednesday the 27th as she quietly passed away in room #341 of the Logan Regional Hospital!!! I've known this would surely take place but the final culmination was and still is extremely hard to bear. I cannot express, in writing, how I actually feel. I am glad and yet sad. I miss her and I know I will continue to do so. Yet, I would not call her back even if I could do so. I love her so very much, more than I ever thought to be possible. I take great comfort in knowing that I will join her in the not too distant future. Our religious convictions and our temple marriage are beyond value. My biggest challenge will be to finish out my life in a way which will make me worthy of her.

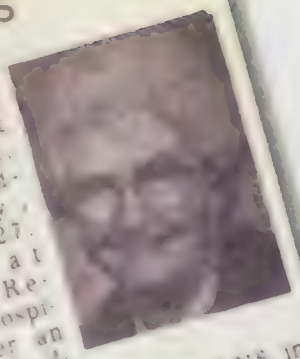
Dad and the rest of us on the day of Mom's funeral, 1 April 1985. L-R: Lauris, Duane, Brian, Twila, Dad, Deb, Tami, LaVel, and Brent.







T. Davis



Thelma Hall Davis, 68, 371 West 2nd South, died Wednesday, March 27, 1985, at Logan Regional Hospital after an extended illness.

She was born Sept. 27, 1916, in Gridley, Calif., a daughter of Jick and Ruby Hall. She married Versal LaVel Davis on Feb. 12, 1937. Their marriage was later solemnized in the Salt Lake LDS Temple.

She graduated with honors from Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, and from Utah State University.

She lived in St. Anthony, Idaho, for 15 years and in Logan for 23 years.

She was active in the LDS Church. She served in various positions including ward and stake relief society president. She and her husband were active in ward and stake dance programs for many years. They also served as genealogy missionaries at the Logan Genealogy Library and later as welfare services missionaries on the Maricopa Indian Reservation in Arizona.

She is survived by her husband of Logan, five sons, Clinton LaVel Davis, Georgetown, Texas; Versal Brent Davis, Skamania, Wash.; Brian J. Davis, Bountiful; Lauris Hall Davis, Logan; Duane McDaniel Davis, Logan; three daughters, Mrs. Richard (Twila) Bird, Denver, Colo.; Mrs. John (Tamara) Clark, Idaho Falls, Idaho; Mrs. Trey (Debra) Nelson, Austin, Texas; 29 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; three brothers, Keith Hall, St. Charles, Idaho; Ray Hall, Brigham City; Wayne Hall, Syracuse; Mrs. Calvin (Rada) Kowallis, Roosevelt; Mrs. Russel (Ruth) Ware, and Nola Hall, both of Ogden.

Funeral services will be Monday at 1 p.m. in the Logan 1st Ward Chapel, 39 South 1st West, with Bishop S. Eugene Needham conducting. Friends may call at the Allen-Hall Mortuary Sunday evening from 6-8 p.m. and Monday at the mortuary from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Burial in Logan City Cemetery.

Top Dad and most of his grandchildren, 1 April 1985

Bottom Dad, his children and their spouses.

Special, to My Beloved

(Journal 1, pp. 147-149, Nov. 7, 1861)

Dear Mom, this letter and journal entry will never be formally mailed but it is my sincere hope that you will know about its contents. I pray that what I record here will be treasured by you and ours for a long, long time.

I am, at this time, alone in Bessie's home on West Center Street. I feel secure and wanted here but no place will ever be as choice as those which you and I shared together. I honestly feel that my association with Bessie is proper and productive and I have the strong impression that you approve. Be assured I try to do nothing that would offend you. After all, you are my very first and wanted companion. I truly look forward to being with you again.

It seems that absence really makes the heart grow fonder. In the past 20 months I have had many periods of loneliness. I, of course, think of you and our years together. In this letter I wish to record some of those deep impressions. I hope you appreciate such and also I pray that what I record will be valuable to all of ours.

In the years to come I sincerely pray with you that our choice and loved descendants will cherish these memories and build their own lives upon them. I know you believe me when I say that our lives together were very joyous and, I hope, purposeful.

I've missed your physical presence very much the last 20 months. I miss your smile, your quiet endurance, your spoken words of love, your meaningful consideration of me and ours. This often extended to many, many people outside our family circle. I miss our planning together about life in general and also about religious matters. Most of all I miss your soft but-genuine, "I love you, Dork."

I can't help but become very emotional when I see your portrait. I keep it where I can talk to you and express my deep love to you. I hope you are privileged to receive these heartfelt declarations.

I often think and ponder about your deep devotion to me and our family, of how you were always ready and willing to maintain this strength even in spite of many conflicts of life.

I am reminded of your firm but forgiving nature, of how you held your standards high yet you were always willing to reach out and down to all of us to help correct and overcome our faults. Your constant concern, though quiet, was always manifest for me and all of ours. You also extended this for the benefit of many others. Religion and testimony became a very strong combination and force in your life. It helped me then and still remains to guide and direct me now. We are still "one."

Your insatiable quest to learn more and more was awesome. Your acquisition of such was the result of wise choosing, which I respect you for.

We had times in our lives when we were faced with sudden decisions to make. You were always ready and willing to make them in "oneness." I almost always felt success, whether the matter was a good or bad problem.

You were never, never demanding about the accumulation of things of the world. Your acceptance of whatever we could afford was always appreciated. I loved and still love you for this honest consideration.

I feel that I am a fun person. I soon discovered that you were also. Together we did many, many things which brought light-heartedness into our lives. I miss this at this time.

It has often been a source of deep satisfaction and pride to remember your great ability to be a leader among your associates. This was proven very often in church and civic circles. I'm sure that my own mild success was influenced by your example.

My dear, I could go on and on writing about you but I'm sure your record speaks for itself. But I must say, I loved you very much and I still do. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that we will be together again to resume our eternal lives together. This keeps me going as I try to patiently wait to embrace you again. You are very precious to me and no one will ever take your place in our eternal togetherness.

I must have been inspired when I composed the notation, which is written on that large painting which Twila painted and gave to us. It reads: "No clouds from the storms of life can dim the Eternal Radiance of true love and devotion." This still expresses my deep love for you.

My deepest love,
Yours
Cy

P.S. It really won't be long until we are together again.



Deb's 1989 acrylic portrait of Mom, which Dad commissioned her to paint for him when he visited her and Trey in Jan. 1989. She painted it from a 1961 photo of Mom (bottom righthand corner). Dad thoughtfully commissioned Deb to paint a similar portrait of Bessie's first husband, Allen Alvord. Both cherished paintings were prominently displayed in Dad and Bessie's bedroom during his final months.

Older Years PSI-1855



Dad and Bessie on their wedding day
20 August 1985

Chapter Twelve

Bessie and Me

1985-1989

VLD
Cs

Dad was dying. We all knew it. He was just fading away. His multiple physical ailments combined with his pining for Mom sapped his desire to live. He was simply giving up.

He lived in the basement of the home he and Mom had inhabited together for 33 years (since 1952). Duane and Mel, as had been arranged before Mom's death, were purchasing the home as they began raising their own young family. They lived in the main portion of the house and looked after Dad's needs. But he had pulled into himself and valiant efforts to lift his spirits had been to no avail.

For the first few months after Mom's passing Dad fulfilled a promise he had made to her when she had become too ill to complete her life history; he began where she had left off — at her high school graduation — and wrote of their courtship years to the time of their marriage. That completed, he then carefully labeled and mounted many years of photos into three ring binders and made sure all of the Davis family records were organized and ready to hand over to me. The records, which I treasure, were my portion of the family estate. But when that project was done, he was at loose ends and rattled around aimlessly, deject-



Dad, three months after Mom's death, while visiting us in Lakewood, Colorado, June 1985. We took him to see our friend's horses in an effort to spark some enthusiasm — tap into his beloved ranch memories.



edly. Duane kept us informed regarding his depression.

Hoping a get-away might do him good, we invited Dad to spend some time with us in Colorado. When he arrived in mid-June, three months after Mom died, he didn't seem quite as down as I had expected him to be. However, he still wasn't completely back to his usual, jovial self.

One day, with a twinkle in his eye he asked what time our mailman arrived. I responded he should be coming any minute and that got Dad into high gear. He retreated to his room then quickly emerged licking an envelope and hustled it out to the mailbox. He made sure the flag was up so the mailman would know a waiting letter was inside.

I was suspicious! I asked Dad what was up. And he spilled the beans. He told me he had been helping a few widows with some home repairs and one of them had been especially appreciative. Did I remember Bessie Alvord? The letter was for her.

Yes, I did remember Mrs. Alvord! She was the mother of Becce Alvord, who had been one of Tami's best friends in her youth and a close friend of mine as well. She was a lovely woman. I could understand why Dad perked up with her attention warming him.

Dad and Bessie's relationship blossomed quickly! Soon a marriage date was set — her 71st birthday — 20 Aug. 1985, only five months after Mom's death! Bu none of us objected. Bessie brought new life back to Dad, who was 70. He was happy again.

That Scalawag Stallion

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 131)

Little six-year-old Heather, Twila's youngest child, jubilantly ran to her neighbor, George Hills. Standing squarely in front of him she enthusiastically said, "My grandpa is going to get married and she is going to have a baby."

Mr. Hills blinked his eyes and then replied, "Well that will be nice — that is about your grandpa — but are you sure his lady friend is going to have a baby?" "Oh yes, my mommy told me so," Heather emphatically replied.

Dad and Bessie leave the Logan Temple following their "for time only" marriage there, 20 Aug. 1985. Bessie had beer previously sealed to her first husband, Allen.

Thereupon this news break closed until Mr. Hills chanced to meet Twila and then he said, "Twila, I'm pleased to hear about your father's marriage plans but I really hesitate to believe he has to get married. At his age he should be able to control his emotions better than that."

Twila stood aghast as George spoke, she not knowing what little Heather had previously said.

"But George, I . . . I . . . ," she started to say, then he interrupted and added, "Well, don't make a big deal of it but let the scalawag stallion know that I have all the equipment necessary to control the consequences of such emotion."

"I'm sorry, but what are you talking about?" Twila asked. George Hills then quietly told her what Heather had informed him about.

Then Twila realized what had taken place. It was this: It had been learned by the family that a neighbor, JoAnna Davis (her last name identical to mine), was going to have a new baby and Heather had inadvertently believed this woman to be my future mate.

And on the subject of baby making, George Hills speaks somewhat with authority; he makes his living by selling contraceptives for Johnson and Johnson Pharmaceutical!



Dad teases Bessie about his dearth of honeymoon funds as they relax following their marriage ceremony, 20 Aug. 1985. They are sitting on the back porch of Bessie's home located at 235 West Center Street in Logan's historic district. The home originally belonged to her first husband's father. Bessie raised her children to adulthood in this home and this is where Dad and she lived during their four years together.

Backgound photo: A scene in the Colorado Rockies, where Dad and Bessie spent part of their honeymoon.



Logan First Ward girls and their mothers at their mutual Mia Maid class "rose-tying ceremony," 1966. Mom (center) and Bessie (far right) are shown with their daughters, Tami and Becce Alvord, who were best friends (along with Kathy Austin, second from left).

Photo identification L-R: Sister Nelson and her daughter, Louise; Glenna Austin and Kathy, Thelma Davis and Tami, Josephine Sommers and Saundra, and Bessie Alvord and Becce.

Bessie Martha Glauser

Bessie's mother, Martha Von Niederhausern, and father, Frederick Glauser, were both Swiss. Their families each joined the church in Switzerland in the early 1900s then immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Logan, where the young couple met then married in the Logan Temple. Bessie was the second of eight children born to the Glausers, who raised them with firm religious values and a strong work ethic.

In 1938, Bessie married Paul Allen Alvord, a young man with an artistic bent, who was working at Cache Valley Knitting Mills as a ladies' knit clothing salesman. Early in their marriage she worked modeling clothing he sold as they traveled together through the midwest.[1] They eventually had five children: Karen, Sid, Kathryn Marie (who died as a child), Rebecca and JoAnne.

Following Allen's death in 1966, Bessie continued raising their children alone for nineteen years. She worked at Logan Optical and later in the Cache County Auditor's office.[3] Churchwise, she associated with the Davises as part of the Logan First Ward family for over three decades. During Mom's final years, Bessie and her companion, Nellie Olsen, were her visiting teachers.[4]

Bessie was strong, diligent and never idle. She loved to cook, sew, crochet, and was ever learning. Dad recognized Bessie as a person of *"inner strength who accomplished goals of significant importance in her life."* He praised her remarkable success in managing *"to aid and care for a family with a terminally ill husband and father. She did this for several years prior to Allen's death and then for about 20 years after as she cared for and raised four very commendable children. The remarkable and interesting part is that she did this almost completely without charitable help."*[5]

Dad and Bessie pose with most of Bessie's family, Aug. 1985. Because of our ages and stages in life — married and raising families of our own — the Alvord bunch and the Davis bunch didn't intermingle too much but our regard for one another was respectful and warm. To my knowledge there were few objections to Dad and Bessie's marriage in either family.

Those pictured and their relationships to Bessie are:
1. Lynn Affleck (son-in-law, Becce's husband)
2. Karen Alvord Nielsen (daughter)
3. Becce Alvord Affleck (daughter)
4. Benjamin Affleck (grandson, Becce's son)
5. Sheri Nielsen Snowden (granddaughter, Karen's daughter)
6. Lonnie Snowden (grand-son-in-law, Sheri's husband)
7. Angela Affleck (granddaughter, Becce's daughter)
8. Bessie Martha Glauser Alvord Davis
9. Mark Howard (son-in-law, JoAnn's husband)
10. Versal LaVel Davis (husband)
11. JoAnne Alvord Howard (daughter)
12. Nathan Howard (grandson, JoAnne's son)
13. Dallan Affleck (grandson, Becce's son)
14. Jennifer Howard (granddaughter, JoAnne's daughter)
15. Carami Affleck (granddaughter, Becce's daughter)
16. Ferrin Affleck (grandson, Becce's son)
17. Emily Affleck (granddaughter, Becce's daughter)

Missing at the time the photo was taken were: Sid Alvord (son), Gloria Alvord (daughter-in-law, Sid's wife) and their five children: Paul, Mindy, Shannon, Chad, and Jennifer. (Sid, Gloria and Jennifer are pictured on p. 382.)

Also absent were Merrill Nielsen (son-in-law, Karen's husband) and Mark Nielsen (grandson, Karen's son).

Was It Meant To Be?

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 133)

It is now the 30th day of December 1985. The year is almost over and I feel I should comment on a few developments as they have and do effect my life. It has been almost a year since Thelma passed away on March 27, and so much has transpired since then.

Several months after that traumatic date I began to evaluate my intended or expected future and after having prayerfully done so I commenced dating Bessie. I state here, very emphatically, that I did not desire to "play the field" and associate with various companions. I, of course, thought of several individuals but only one became a prime target of my aspirations. I had spent 50 years in creating an ideal relationship with Thelma and I had no desire to improve upon that. But I did crave togetherness with someone and Bessie seemed to fill this driving need better than anyone I had considered.

So, we commenced dating and I realized that I had no need or desire to be with anyone else. I soon learned that we complimented each other's existence at



a very special time of need. We soon made plans to join in marriage and from that time our lives began to include each other. It was sobering but, yet, I felt very good about things as our plans started to materialize.

Finally, Aug. 20 became our marriage date — it was Bessie's birthday. We were married for time only in the Logan Temple. Many, many of the family, on both sides, attended our temple wedding. It was very comforting to observe so many who were spiritually and religiously qualified to attend such a service.

Prior to our marriage plans Bessie had placed her home (now ours) upon the sales market. After our marriage date was decided upon she removed the sale of such from the real estate establishment. We live in the same church ward that has been our pride for over 33 years. Church activity has not changed since our marriage. The many neighborhood acquaintances are still with us and only time has marched on.

I think I can express my views, at this time, with Bessie. We both feel very much the same about serious matters dealing with life and living. We both know our roles here and expect to make them productive and useful. Our lives have entwined as we face life together for as long as providence deserves. Life is different, but yet it is good and purposeful. Our religious views are very similar and we experience no opposition in this field. Also, we both express similar attitudes regarding practicality in worldly ways. Money is a necessity only to remain independent as long as we possibly can. The acquisition of things of the world is minimal.

It seemed incredible that we each had an income of minimal amount but by casting our lot together we can manage very well. I often think about how I perhaps could have united with someone who had more than ample finances, but I'm pleased to remember that such was not even a remote consideration in my pre-marriage plans.

As we reveal our lives I discover that most of the desired activities of my life are very similar to hers. This is especially true as we enjoy the solitude of the great outdoors, the effective management of our home and yard, our sincere connection with family members, and the great consolation of religious-oriented testimony. Furthermore, we talk freely of our Celestial mates whom we know are to be considered at all times.

As time has gone by I have realized more and more how this union must have been right. Her entire family has accepted me very well and my side has also received her just the same. Several, of each side, have expressed very honest and personal opinions regarding their thoughts about our marriage. Absolutely no one has voiced any disapproval.

I wonder if all this is a result of plans perhaps made in the Spirit World. We know so little about that time but I'm sure that much of our life here is based on plans made there.

I'm equally certain that our former mates are knowledgeable about us here and that they are hoping we will conduct ourselves properly so we can be together again with each of them in the not too distant future.

A Fine Woman

Calling her a "fine woman," Dad was grateful to have Bessie partially fill the hole in his soul left by Mom's passing (and so were we). Five months after their marriage he wrote:

I've tried to maintain a sensible and purposeful lifestyle as Bessie and I have tried to compliment each other's life. She has been very understanding and helpful. There have been minor differences in our thinking but nothing of major importance has been left unresolved.[6]

When Bessie left to visit several of her daughters in Nevada a few months later, Dad felt her absence acutely.

I've missed her a great deal and I'll be happy to have her here again. She definitely fills a need in my life now that Mom is temporarily separated from me. . . I must admit that I become highly emotional as I think of Mom and also of Bessie. How was I so fortunate to have such wonderful companions?[7]

When at home together Dad and Bessie involved themselves in church work, temple assignments, yard work, and home chores

They also traveled. In January 1986, they took a leisurely, long train trip that circled from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles to Austin to Chicago to Denver then back to Salt Lake again. And typically, Dad planned for another Canada-Alaska trip; he was anxious to show Bessie the land to the north he loved so much. They hoped to find someone else to accompany them but as late as May of 1986 they had yet to locate traveling companions. This didn't deter Dad, however. He resolved the two of them would travel alone if need be this despite the continued deterioration of his health.



In Denver, Colorado, Dad and Bessie pose next to the Amtrak train they had just exited on the last leg of a three-week, 5,000 mile tour, 2 Feb. 1986.

In his journal Dad summarized the long train trip: *My impressions about going by Amtrak are generally favorable though at times I was dismayed to see the debris along the railroad tracks, especially in the large cities. The service was excellent, however, and we experienced no difficulty in travel. The entire rail fare was $450.00 for Bessie and myself. We both feel it was a unique experience and we enjoyed it a great deal.*

We were able to visit the Lilljinquists (Bessie's sister, Ruth, and her husband, Newell) in Santa Ana, California; LaVel and Colleen in Georgetown, Texas; Trey and Deb in Austin, Texas; Brent in Houston, Texas; Bessie Lynn Affleck (Bessie's daughter and her husband) in Spring, Texas; and Twila and Richard in Denver, Colorado. [They also spent some time in Chicago, Illinois, sightseeing].[8]

Dad was well-received by members of Bessie's family when they met him for the first time. He described his reception as "friendly and cordial."[9]

Bone Cancer Spreads

In February 1986, after his annual full-length bone scan, Dad received word his bone cancer, which had been diagnosed a year earlier had "become considerably worse" and his future looked grim. The news was sobering but he didn't worry for himself — he'd long ago come to terms with the probability of a shortened life — but now he had Bessie to think about.

I am somewhat at a loss as to how I should regard this [news about spreading cancer]. *I'm not entirely surprised, yet I feel badly also. Not for myself but for Bessie. She has been superb in understanding about my physical problems. If I do suffer a rather early demise, then she will be subjected to another heart rending parting.* [Bessie's first husband had died after a lengthy battle with kidney disease two decades earlier.] *I wish I could avoid such, but who knows?! I sincerely pray that she can and will respond without undue stress and bitterness. I truly love her!*

Five months later he expressed: *I have experienced little pain but I must admit that I cannot seem to acquire very much physical strength. I tire easily and have some light dizziness at times. But I'm not going to worry about what may happen. If I remain in mortality, I will be with Bessie. If I go, I will be with Mom. Either way I cannot lose.*

The Botched Alaska Trip

Regardless of his health, Dad's plans for their 1986 Alaska trip remained priority one. They finally found another couple to travel with but once begun, the trip soured quickly. Personality conflicts with the other woman and Dad's poor health undermined any enjoyment he might have felt while traveling with Bessie in his beloved Canada. (He bailed out before reaching Alaska.)

On 8 August 1986, while all alone in room #212 at the Mackenzie Inn in Fort St. John, British Columbia Dad dejectedly recorded the untimely end to what would have been his final Alaska trip

On July 28th Bessie and I joined Nick and Barbara Peterson as we commenced our long journey to Canada and Alaska. We utilized their 5th-wheel camping rig and we made suitable arrangements for financing . . . However,

Bessie and Me

Barbara & I had some pretty strong words over the use of the travel trailer. Also, I discovered that she is a strong-willed, domineering, and selfish person. She becomes inconsiderate of others and I must admit that my dislike for her grew a great deal in the six days we travelled together. Even Bessie had some friction with her. However, I state here that Nick was very, very cooperative and considerate. We had no negative conflict with him at all. I respect him for tolerating a wife who has such negative characteristics.

Now another matter took place, which I hoped would not. It was this — I grew physically unable to continue as my physical ailments became very apparent. I was subjected to a great deal of bouncing while riding within the camper. This created severe back and leg pain. I believe I could have managed, however, by using caution in traveling long distances and by the careful use of proper medication. This I intended to do but Barbara made it very clear that she did not approve of my proceeding because of the uncertainty of the future.

I could understand her attitude of concern very well but she made it very manifest that a great part of her feelings were of self concern and she did not want me to continue.

Now I state here that I did not voluntarily concede to her wishes but rather I preferred to be away from her even if it meant my returning home. There, I could balance my physical needs for better.

Bessie was faced with a decision there as to whether to complete the trip but she hated to leave me alone, especially when I was having physical distress. But I counselled with her and assured her that I would be OK. She then, very reluctantly, joined the Petersons and continued on.

. . . . The next month will no doubt be lonely and frustrating as I await Bessie's return. I will try to recuperate and expect to be as normal as I can. I will miss her very, very much. I do love her. . . . This cancellation of the Al-Can trip is very disappointing.[12]

A week into what was supposed to have been a six-week trip, Dad flew alone from Fort St. John to Edmonton, Canada, then to Salt Lake City, leaving Bessie to continue on with the Petersons. At home he didn't feel well and miserably watched television or just puttered around. And he was lonely. He missed Bessie very much. She called several times during the next week. Five days after returning home Dad wrote of one call:

She was obviously upset and wished she were here with me. However, I urged her to continue on and visit McKinley Park, then if she wished, I would pay for her trip home by plane. I don't know what she will elect to do but regardless, it will be a homeward bound experience in any case.

I have missed her a great deal and I know I need her near to me. I've grown to depend upon her companionship, which is very precious to me.[13]

Bessie, missing Dad, too, flew home from Anchorage, Alaska. They were happy to be reunited but it was a disappointing, expensive conclusion to their long-anticipated Canada-Alaska trip together.

Even though Dad's health was on a continual decline during the next few years, he never gave up planning for another Alaska trip. His many Alaska-oriented journal entries bear witness to the magnetic pull the north country had on his soul . Even in 1988, the year before his death, after he and Bessie had been forced to cancel short trips because of his physical condition, he still made plans for Alaska. In January 1988 he wrote:

I am planning to go to Canada and Alaska this next summer. Bessie apparently does not wish to go, but whether or not, I expect to go even if I must go alone. . . . I realize this desire is an obsession with me but I would like to go one more time.[14]

As each of his final summers rolled around, though, the stark reality of his poor health ultimately erased fulfillment of his Alaska dreams. Undeterred, he dreamed on. Even in his final months, when his bone cancer was advancing quickly, he still hoped for, reached for, dreamed of Alaska.

"I'm still planning on Can-Al next year in Aug & Sept." he wrote on 26 Dec. 1988. *"I do not know just how this will be done, but I'm making tentative plans anyway."*[15]

Seasonal Preparations

(Flashback. Journal IV. p. 147)

At this time, in 1987, one can obtain just about any life-sustaining item that is normally needed or desired. Of course, money is required to do this; however, I can't help but reflect back through the years and note the immense contrast between then and now.

One of the more very evident situations is the immediate availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in the common supermarket. Years ago, these were not to be had except in the local season of production. Therefore, it became necessary and wise to store such by canning, drying, or cool storing. By doing this, each item could be made available the year around, but it no longer classified as fresh.





1970s photos of Bessie and her home at 235 West Center Street in Logan, Utah, where she and Dad lived. The Alvord home is located in a lovely, historic neighborhood, which includes many large, gracious homes built by Logan's earliest residents — all within the boundaries of the Logan First Ward. The home originally belonged to the parents of Bessie's first husband, Allen Alvord. It still has a large, well-preserved barn in the back and originally included a large portion of land in the rear. Alan's Grandpa Alvord bred and raised horses, which he shipped to Kentucky for sale. Allen and Bessie moved into the home in 1945, when his father was in his early 80s and needed assistance. They took care of him for three years until his death.

Other things were stored as well. Common firewood was a dire necessity and several cords were procured for use during the fall, winter, and spring. Some was used for kitchen stove heating during the entire year.

I well remember when I assisted my father as we cut large blocks of ice from an open pond. These were hauled to a small, frame building, which was about two-thirds full of sawdust. The ice was carefully packed into the sawdust where it would remain almost intact until it was removed as needed in the warm months of the summer.

Year-round food for animals was also necessary. For winter feed, we stored hay in large haystacks and grain in granaries for animals use. Salt for the cattle was also a storage item.

For our own winter food supply, we butchered a cow, a pig, some turkeys, chickens, or geese during cold weather in the fall. The meat was then placed in a cool shed and was used as needed until the supply ran out. If warm weather came prematurely, the existing supply was either canned or bottled or was divided among family or friends.

I often wonder which time was or is the better. Admittedly it is great to be able to obtain almost any food now, but I firmly believe that the seasonal foods of years ago were appreciated a great deal more. Furthermore, it did not seem to be such a constant financial burden.

Well, maybe I'm just a little bit old fashioned — in fact, probably quite a bit.

Bath Tub Blues

(Flashback, Journal IV, p. 141)

My word Verse, you can't use that!!" This sudden and definitive remark was made by Bessie after she had stepped into the bathroom where I was taking a needed bath.

I had, as usual, simply filled the tub with warm, sudsy water. Then I slowly lowered myself into the warm solution. After having done so, I picked up a rag, which lay upon the edge of the tub. I then simply started to soak and clean my head by squeezing the water from the rag and letting it cover my entire head.

It was then that Bessie needed an article from the bathroom she stepped inside to get such.

"You be sure and wash your head and scrub your hair," she at first exclaimed.

"OK, OK," I replied somewhat grumpily. Thereupon I raised the rag to my head and vigorously wiped. With a gasp she then made the expressive remark recorded above.

"Well what is wrong?" I quickly asked.

"Good Heavens, that rag you are using is the same one I just used to clean the toilet."

I've decided it is best to go solitary into a bathroom then my choice of washrag would not matter. In this case, I probably would not have known the difference. Anyway, my sparse hair needs fertilizing.



Artwork by Debra Davis Nelson

"I then simply started to soak and clean my head by first squeezing the water from the rag and letting it cover my entire head..."

Dad and Bessie playing "Chubbie Bunnies" at our house, 27 April 1987.

Bessie was a good sport when it came to rolling with Dad's sense of humor. Here they are playing "Chubbie Bunnies" a game where the winner is the one who can stuff the most marshmallows in his mouth and still enunciate the words, "Chubbie Bunnies." Bessie also joined Dad in leg wrestling tournaments and harmonica competitions.





She Didn't Quite Make It!

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 138)

Well Honey, what would you like for breakfast?" Bessie asked as we prepared to eat.

"Oh the same, I guess, just be sure to include the grapefruit," I replied.

Therefore she proceeded to supply a simple meal of prepared cereal, a warm drink for herself, milk for me, and, of course, the prepared grapefruit.

We were quietly consuming this when the telephone, in the front room, began ringing. Bessie answered it and while so doing I decided to have a little fun. So, I poured a generous amount of table salt in her half-eaten cereal. Then I sat back and awaited her return to the table. As this took place, she told me her sister, Carma, wanted a little help in finishing an afghan.

Bessie sat down and promptly took a large spoonful of the treated cereal. She half-swallowed it, then realized that I had doctored it.

She immediately arose and started for me, but I was already retreating to the nearby bedroom. But she caught me and repeatedly beat upon my back. I was laughing and laughing as she did this.

Presently she returned to the table and said, "Well. I'm going to have a slice of toast; you probably haven't done anything to that."

While she was occupied in preparing the bread, I quietly salted the warm drink, which was still upon the table. She did not see me as I rendered this second application.

When she returned to the table and took a sip or two from the cup, I began to laugh again.

"Well what is so funny now?" she enjoined.

"Oh nothing that I can talk about," I haltingly replied.

Then she took another long sip, which consisted of the dregs of the cup. Then it happened again, only worse! She acquired a nasty and surprised expression on her face and then all that was in her mouth came gushing forth over the table and floor.

Once again I burst out laughing and again she gave chase, but this time she did not pursue me very far. "Oh dear, I've got to go to the bathroom!!" she excitedly exclaimed.

Thereupon she started across the room heading for the seclusion of the bathroom. Well, she didn't make it in time.

However, time was on my side as she mentally cooled off while taking a necessary shower.

I expect her to get even!"

Family Acceptance

In August, 1987, Dad and Bessie hosted different Alvord and Davis groups of family members at various times over a two-week period in their home at 235 West Center in Logan. Brian and Jackie and their children stayed with them for a few days visiting from Seattle. And all of Bessie's descendants converged for a 10-day visit centered around a reunion and a funeral.

Dad wrote in the midst of all the family hoopla, *"It has been hectic but very enjoyable. It seems incredible how Bessie's family accept me so well and how Mom's and my kids accept Bessie. It is all very, very heartwarming.*[17]

Not only did Dad get along well with Bessie's children, but he was warmly accepted by her extended family as well. Bessie had been single for 19 years and had done exceptionally well raising and supporting her children and managing her home. Her extended family naturally felt protective of her welfare and wanted only the best for this delightful woman, who had been such a tremendous example of single womanhood. That they seemed to like Dad was gratifying for him. And he liked them, too. In his journal he recorded many entries expressing his affection for Bessie's folk — the Glousers, Niederhauserns, and Alvords.

As for our family liking Bessie, what was there NOT to like. She was so easy to love. And we were all grateful for her warm companionship with Dad, her good humor, and her selfless service.

A Lesson Learned

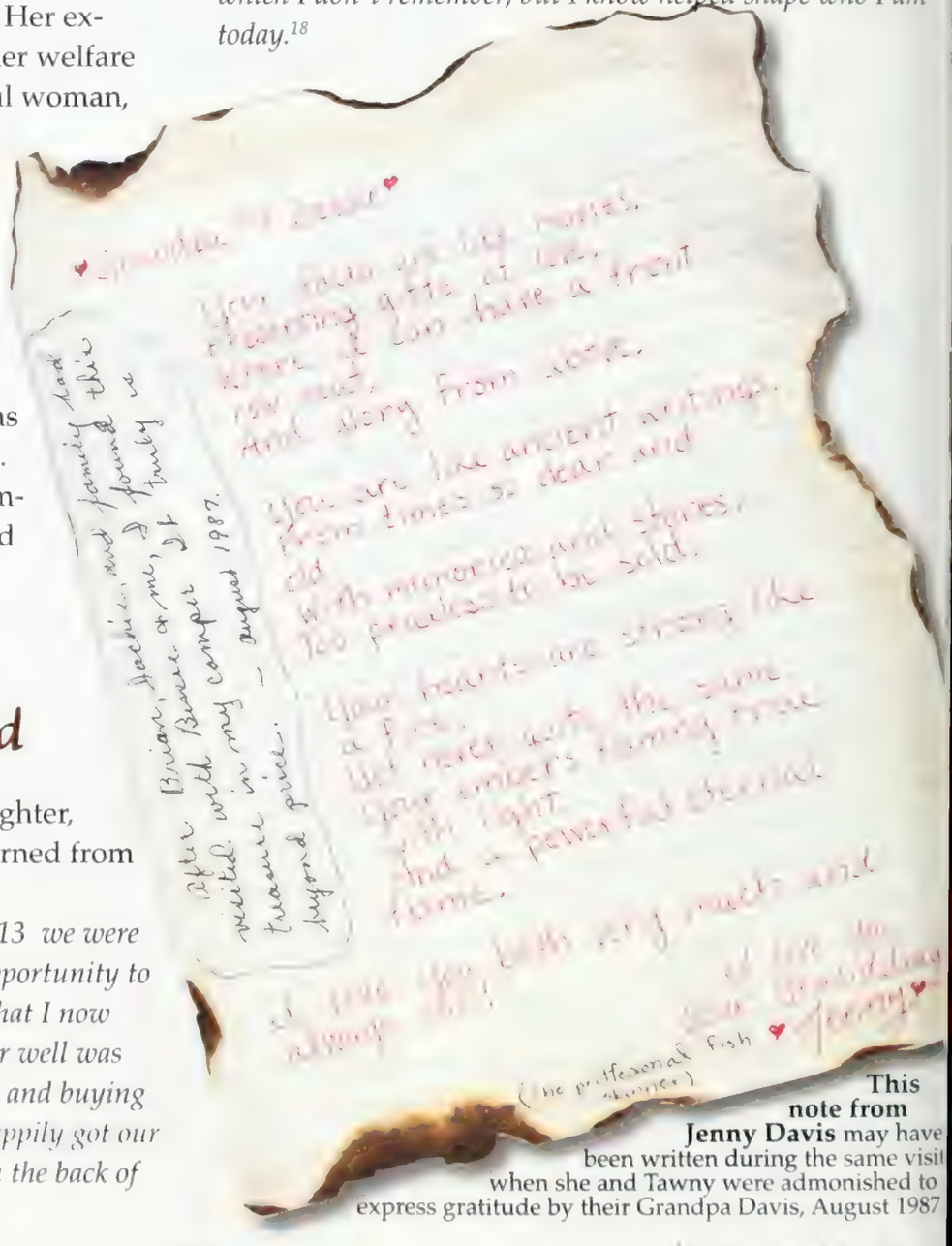
Tawny Davis, Brian and Jackie's daughter, recorded a lesson she and Jenny learned from their Grandpa Davis and Bessie:

When I was about 15 and Jenny was about 13 we were visiting Grandpa and Bessie and we had the opportunity to ride home with them from a family gathering that I now don't remember at all. But what I do remember well was Grandpa and Bessie stopping on the way home and buying some ice cream treats for Jenny and me. We happily got our ice cream and got back into the little camper on the back of his pickup (What? Seatbelts? No way, not when there's a fun camper to play and lounge in).

We arrived at their house on Center Street and Jenny and I (now happily ice cream satiated) tumbled out of the camper and ran off to the back yard to play. I think it was maybe two minutes before Grandpa — in that not-very-happy Grandpa voice of his —called us into the house and sat us down. In a stern, but still loving way, he admonished us for not once saying thank you to him or Bessie for the ride or the ice cream.

I remember how both Jenny and I were in tears, feeling so ashamed. We hugged Grandpa and Bessie, choked out some mumbling apologies and gratitudes, and slunk out the back door again.

Silver lining? I am (hopefully) now the most prolific thanks-giver ever. I love that I had a Grandpa who loved me enough to admonish me away from selfish ignorance. I am so grateful for this and his many other teachings, most of which I don't remember, but I know helped shape who I am today.[18]



This note from Jenny Davis may have been written during the same visit when she and Tawny were admonished to express gratitude by their Grandpa Davis, August 1987

Prostate Surgery

Recognizing his bone cancer was worsening, Dad finally decided to submit to what he referred to as the "indignity of emasculation"[19] (prostate surgery) in an effort to reduce the amount of cancer-causing male hormones in his system.

The out-patient procedure was performed on 25 Aug. 1986, not long after his return from Canada.[20] After a normal recovery for a man of his age, his general health improved — several of his nagging symptoms abated for a while and, gratefully, his bone cancer went into remission briefly.[21] He generally felt somewhat better for a while.

One of the unfortunate (but common) residual effects of his prostate surgery was urinary incontinence. It became necessary for him to use part of a disposable diaper to prevent visible leakage. (This was before the days of commercially available adult incontinence products.) Dad wrote the following Flashback describing a humorous incident associated with his diaper use.

My Apostasy — Almost

(Flashback, Journal IV, p. 171)

I wish to relate a justifiable reason for terminating membership in our church as illustrated by the following true account:

Yesterday [in 1988] was a typical Sunday in our ward. Bessie and I took active part in the various meetings. I even taught a very serious lesson in my High Priest class. After all this we returned home, had a late dinner, then prepared to go to the stake center and join about 75 others who were practicing, as a choir, to render special music at our stake conference to be held next month.

Now the following for background purposes:

Recently I underwent a serious operation which, as of this time, has left me unable to completely control my water works. So I've been forced to utilize a half section of a baby diaper to insure that my problem can be handled.

After choir practice, we returned home and relaxed for a short time before going to bed. Bessie was making a telephone call and while doing so, I simply made a routine journey to the bathroom. I was shocked to realize that my protective pad was missing!! I searched my trouser legs and around my waist — no pad! Then I retraced my steps in the rest of the house — still no pad!

Then I somewhat shamefully approached Bessie and I told her of my dilemma.

"Well forget it, use another one," she replied.

"That sounds okay, but what if I lost the darn thing while I was at choir practice?"

Well so what, it would seem as if a baby had lost it," she said.

"Bessie, you will recall that there were no babies present. If I lost that blasted pad there, several people would have noticed."

"Well honey, stop worrying about it, we've got more pads," she tried to assure me.

"Yes, I know, but how will I ever face all those people again? I simply could not do it."

"What will you do then?" she asked.

I resolutely replied, " We could move to a remote area far from here and assume different names or apostatize from the church!"

"Honey, I feel sorry for you, but don't let it get you down," Bessie uttered in true consideration and in an effort to sooth my concern.

Well, Bessie finally found the elusive pad. It was lying on the floor where she and I had been kneeling as we said our evening prayers.

Seven or Seventy?

At this time, as I compose this brief entry, I am 70 years of age. I recall when I was only 7 years old and it was my duty to keep the woodbox filled with firewood for the kitchen stove and the round, Charter Oak Heater. To me it seemed to be hard, demanding labor as I split, then carried the prepared fuel to the box near the stove or heater. I resented the chore and always felt that someday I would stop doing such.

Well, now many years later, I am again preparing wood and carrying the same to a fireplace in Bessie's and my home at 235 W. Center in Logan. My ticker rebels and my arthritis acts up but I still have to do the same work.

When a child, I had no physical impairments but my youthful inconsideration ran rampant. Today, the situations have reversed.



Versal L. Davis Reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado — 19 July 1986

(Dad, Bessie, and the VLD children are listed in bold face below. Missing Davis siblings: LaVel, Brent, and Brian.)

1. Richard E Bird (Twila)
2. Shalyce Clark (Tami)
3. Jon Davis (Lauris)
4. **Twila Davis Bird**
5. Marci Davis (Lauris)
6. Rachel Nelson (Deb)
7. **Debra Davis Nelson**
8. **Lauris Hall Davis**
9. Austin Davis (Duane)
10. Dorothy Minkler Davis (Lauris)
11. Jim Davis (Lauris)
12. Tiffany Bird (Twila)
13. Anna Nelson (Deb)
14. Ashley Davis (Duane)
15. Melanie Anderson Davis (Duane)
16. **Versal LaVel Davis**
17. Estelle Davis (Brent)
18. **Bessie Alvord Davis**
19. Trisha Bird (Twila)
20. Travis Bird (Twila)
21. Lyle Davis (LaVel)
22. Colleen Olsen Davis (LaVel)
23. **Duane Davis**
24. Tami Dee Clark (Tami)
25. **Tami Davis Clark**
26. Trey Nelson (Deb)
27. Heather Bird (Twila)
28. Christine Davis (LaVel)
29. Jared Clark (Tami)
30. Raquelle Bird (Twila)

The Glue was Gone

From my perspective it seemed that when Mom died, the glue that held our family together (collectively and individually) was gone, at least temporarily.

It had been Mom who coordinated family get-togethers, cheered us on in our individual pursuits, counseled us when we sought advice. She had remembered birthdays, recorded the details of our lives, and served as the conduit for all family communications. She had kept us informed of each other's successes and challenges. She had welcomed our children with open arms and big, squishy hugs. She had been our spiritual anchor.

None of this diminished Dad. He simply filled a different, equally important role. Mom had been the nurturer; he had been the provider. With her gone we knew he continued to love us — would be there for us — but our mother's warmth was missing.

You'd think that as fully grown adults, with families of our own, we would have coped better but for some reason, after Mom's death, several of us seemed to just let go. For some of us, our will to do battle with private adversities seemed to crumble. However, not all individual and family crises at that time were of our own doing; some were beyond our control.

During Dad's four years of mortality following Mom's death, he agonized over family matters involving infidelity, heart attack, divorce, business failure, Davis tumors (new and recurring), miscarriage, joblessness, excommunication, financial reverses, and colon cancer. Regardless of their causes, our family's challenges caused Dad great angst. He expressed yearning for Mom's presence. He missed counseling with her regarding our needs.

"I do miss Mom very, very much, especially at times like this," he wrote after recording disturbing news of the personal trials of several family members in October 1987.[22] On another occasion, when considering whether to cushion several children in financial trouble, he recorded, *I surely wish Mom were with me to help make these sobering decisions, and yet, I'm glad she is not burdened with some of the problems that confront me now."*[23] At a time when he could ill afford it, Dad doled out thousands of dollars to help some of us.

In August 1988, when Dad received a call from Trey, who told him Deb had a redevelopment of carotid tumors on each side of her neck, he was shocked and soberly recorded: *"It seems incredible that such is to be faced again. I actually broke down and cried uncontrollably for some time. . . . I certainly miss Mom at crucial times such as these. I'm sure she is aware but I wish I could take her in my arms and confide with her."*[24]

Bessie was a huge support and Dad made a point of mentioning her continuing concern and kindness in his journal, but where his own children were concerned, he knew no one could replace Mom. He mourned her absence. He mourned our shortcomings, which even in the privacy of his journal he never criticized. And he mourned our challenges, which he took to heart as if they were his own. He internalized our pain and our adversities affected his heart — literally. In a journal entry filled with concern over two of his children, he concluded: *I'm very worried about their future. But I must stop getting uptight — it causes me to have too much stress on my old ticker.*[25]

Dad didn't stay in the dumps for long. He bounced back and the pages of his journal are filled with love and pride for us. In one entry he listed some concerns he had for a few family members then he specifically mentioned each of his children and wrote of the strengths he saw in each individual. He concluded by saying: *It is comforting to realize that Mom's and my eight descendants are reputable and responsible individuals. Also the partners of each are helpful in many, many ways. This extends to all the grandkids as well.*[26]

Fishing Therapy Fades

Fishing had been Dad's preferred recreation and mental therapy for many years. In times of stress his soul craved the solitude and relaxation the gentle sport provided. But he found that even this refuge was slowly fading for his fragile heart balked at even the slightest exertion.

Yesterday I joined Reed Johnson and Lyle as we went fishing on Condie Reservoir, he wrote in July 1987. *Our luck was fantastic as we quickly caught our 3 limits of trout. But again I was unable to [do] much in a physical way. It seems so disappointing. I cannot even attach the boat and trailer to my truck. All last night I seemed utterly exhausted. I feel so weak today.*[27]

On a similar occasion, a year later, he recorded:



Dad teaches grandsons Travis Bird (left) and Lyle Davis (right) how to cook fresh trout (a culinary talent he had perfected) at the Davis family reunion in Grand Lake, Colorado, 18 July 1986. Dad's fried trout were the best fish I ever tasted.

At the forepart of June I managed to go fishing on Condie Reservoir. Bessie, LaVel, Lyle, and Reed Johnson joined me as we utilized my boat and motor. Our success rate was perfect as each time we limited out. However, I must admit that even fishing is more and more becoming a difficult physical effort. The loading and unloading of the boat is a task that I can hardly handle. I'd love to do more fishing but the plain effort of loading and unloading the boat is becoming more and more laborious.[28]

The weakness from his heart condition also prevented him from performing routine household chores. Once, discouraged after watching Bessie mow the lawn from a window in the cool interior of their home, Dad wrote in his journal:

All is well here at home except that I seem to grow much weaker during the excessive warm weather. Even fishing does not entice me at this time. I hope I rebound, however.

Bessie has been very busy taking care of the home and yard. I am astounded at her physical ability. It makes me feel somewhat useless. I remember what Mom said when she became physically unable to do for herself. She said, "It's about time I went back home." The significance somewhat applies to me.

Even having grandchildren in their home was sometimes too much for Dad. After hosting an unusually large group of family members for a 10-day stretch, Dad wrote how the added stress affected him physically:

I've experienced considerable weakness and chest pain. I'm sure much of it is caused by the confusion and extra noise. I've had to isolate myself several times.

I don't want to appear negative but I don't think it will be very long before I am with Mom.[31]

In addition to his weak heart, Dad also battled othe ailments. In July 1988 he developed a painful and debil itating case of shingles.[5] And his diabetes, which had seemed under control for a while, began to escalate ou of control that year, too. He was put on a new medication to try to bring his blood sugar count down.[32]

Frequently, after discussing a new downturn in his health or listing a new ailment, Dad philosophically concluded with, "But such is life."

And he continually wondered how long it would be before he'd be with Mom again. He knew she was waiting and anticipated being welcomed by her and other loved ones.

Now, My Inability

(Flashback, late 80s, Journal IV, p. 154)

I don't mean to boast, but in my youth and middle years I enjoyed supreme health and I was able to physically exert to great lengths. No mountain was too high, no trail too long, no shovel too large. A large tree was just a welcome challenge to cut and make into saw logs. I was able to lift 10-gallon milk cans filled with milk. These I would carry by grasping one in my left hand and another with my right. Similar strength-demanding tasks were met and usually conquered.

This ability continued until I was nearly 60 years of age. Then a normal tapering off became evident. But it was not until my heart attack in 1982 that I was robbed of normal strength. Since then I have slowly but surely lost more physical prowess.

At this time, I feel so terribly frustrated because I can do very little physical labor. Even walking is demanding. Simple lawn mowing is virtually impossible to do. Bending down or getting up from a lying position on the floor or ground is a chore. I can hardly ride a common bicycle. Even using a garden hose depletes my strength in a very short time.

Why must this be and how much worse is it apt to become?

I sincerely hope I do not exist for a long time if such takes place. But, who can read the future?

I'm still very grateful for the past.



Dad and Bessie relax at our home in Lakewood, Colorado, 3 Feb. 1986. Dad expressed his appreciation and love for Bessie frequently in his journal. He especially appreciated her tender support during times of physical or emotional stress. Typical was this entry dated 13 Aug. 1987: *My heart continues to become weaker. I use nitro-glycerine much more often than I did a few months ago. But I do not fear this. Bessie is the one I am concerned about. She is truly a choice individual. I pray for her comfort and peace of mind.*

Life Winds Down

Last week I finally went to see Dr. Merrill Daines, Dad wrote in his journal on 26 July 1987. *I've experienced increasing probs with my ticker and I promised Bessie that I would consult him. I did not learn anything new. My diabetes is about normal and my bone cancer is apparently in remission at this time. I inquired about possible open heart surgery but I am afraid such would be very, very expensive. This I will not permit unless such can be done under Medicare limits. Time will yet determine my course of action.*

Bessie has been very, very considerate about matters and I respect her for it. She is a very choice individual and I love her for it. She, of course, will never replace Mom but I'm very fortunate to have her companionship at this needed time in my life.[33]

Giving Up Mission Plans

A few months later Dad and Bessie returned to Dr. Daines' office to consult with him regarding the possiblity of serving a mission. He advised them against the venture.

Bessie and I have talked some of going on a mission. I felt I had better confer with a doctor first, however. Bessie and I had a very serious talk with Dr. M. Daines. He said that my health was too uncertain to become involved in such. I'm disappointed but I'm not surprised. Bessie and I will see what develops in the future. In the meantime we will do considerable temple work.

My actual health is fair at this time but I do experience a lot of weakness and some chest pain. My diabetic problem is bad also with a reading of 204. My arthritis is minimal and the bone cancer is very stable. So I could be worse.[34]

Giving up Work at Ace Mill

After his retirement Dad had continued to do odd jobs at Ace Mill when they occasionally called for help. He enjoyed his association with the shop bunch, felt valued for the skills he provided, and stashed the extra money into his travel fund (for Alaska, of course). But the time finally came when he realized he simply could no longer perform the work. In September 1987 he finally called it quits.

I've been working a bit at Ace Mill but I find it very difficult to do. I suppose I should finally close the door on such activity. It is sobering to realize that after a lifetime of working for a living that I now must stop. I feel that I am almost entirely useless.[35]

Excursions

Though Dad didn't feel topnotch for most of their married life together; nonetheless, he and Bessie did quite a bit of traveling. In February 1989, the spring before he died, when he was feeling like a heart attack was imminent (and it was), he wrote:

Next summer is highly uncertain as I experience increased health problems. But I will take it a day at a time. Perhaps I may go to Can-Al or perhaps not. Even fishing looks speculative at this time.

Bessie has been and is very helpful in joining me. She is truly a commendable individual and she will be rewarded greatly sometime. Her promised husband should be very proud of her.

I constantly ask myself, "How long will it be? I'm ready anytime."

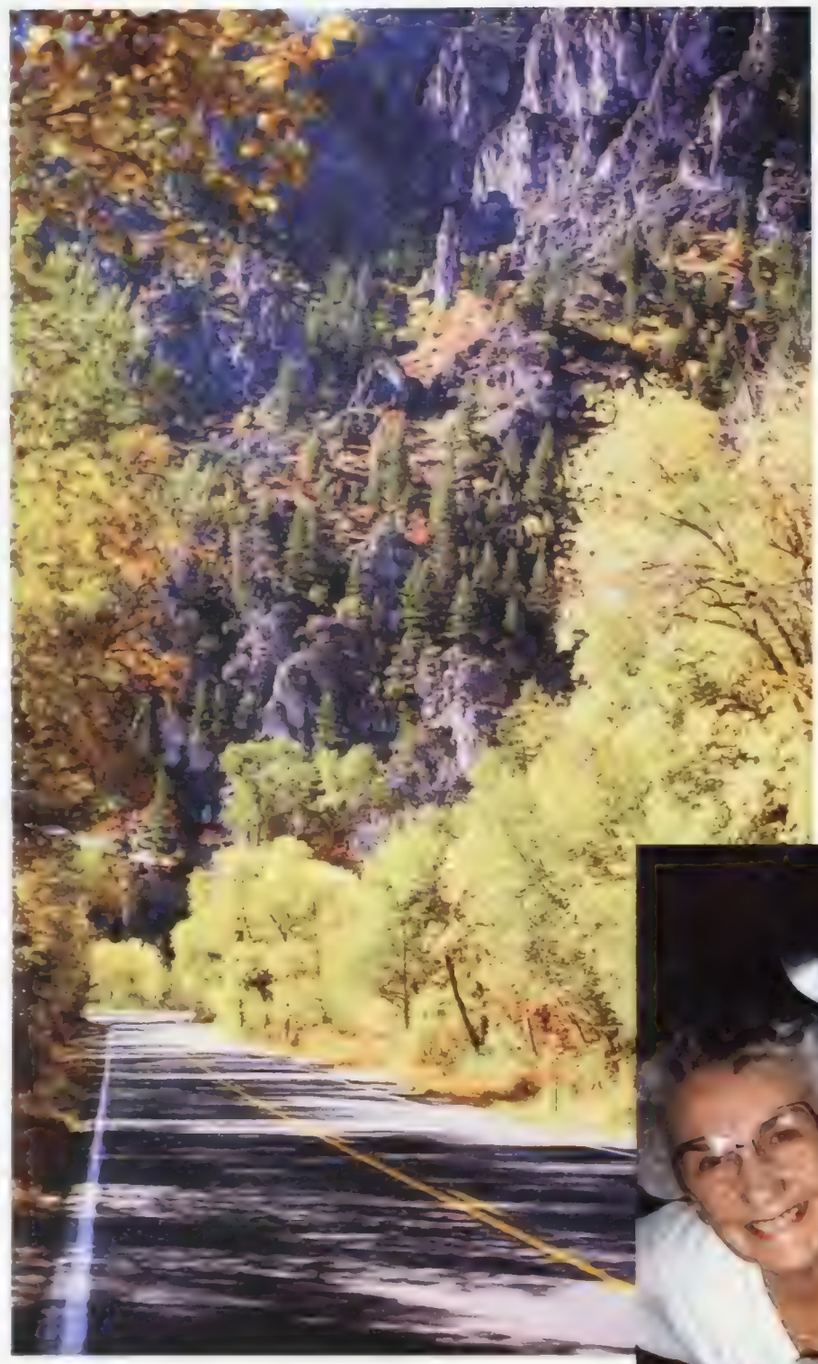
And a month later, in March:

I'm still planning on tripping around as much as I can this summer and fall. It seems that such is almost mandatory with me. The great outdoors is precious to me and always has been. I recall how Mom & I joined together for such pleasure trips. Bessie is helpful, also.

Once Dad and Bessie flew with a tour group to spend 10 days in Mexico (Feb. '87) where they visited Puerto Vallarta, Mexico City, and Acapulco. They also enjoyed their 1986, 5,000-mile Amtrak train trip around the Western U.S..[40] And Dad took Bessie to the Gila Indian Reservation in Arizona (Feb. 1988) to introduce her to his Indian friends and share mission experiences with her on the sites where they occurred.[41] And, of course, their Canada-Alaska trip (Aug. 1987, summarized on p. 367), though shortened, had still been an extensive expedition.[42] Shorter trips included Yellowstone (Sept. 1987)[43] and a long road trip through the northwest (July 1988).[44]

One of Dad's favorite excursions, though, was right here in Utah. On 30 June 1987, he recorded:

Recently Bessie and I returned to Logan as we drove over a road, which is between Escalante and Loa. I was very surprised to learn that this road ascends various colorful mountains to an elevation of almost 10,000 feet. I didn't realize that such beauty existed in this remote area. The color is unbelievable and pine trees are in





Center photo: **Logan Canyon in the fall.** Although Dad traveled widely and appreciated nature whereever he found it, he always enjoyed coming back home to the beauty available within minutes from his own home.

Lower right photo: **Dad indulges in silliness with Mickey Mouse ears** he and Bessie picked up in Disneyland during their Amtrak tour, February 1986.

the northern and higher elevations.

I now feel I have seen all the major areas of Utah. I firmly state here that Utah has a greater diversity of scenic splendor than any state I have ever visited.[45] (Quite a statement from a man so beguiled by the grandeur of Alaska!)

Of course, visits to children and grandchildren took them regularly to other locations: Texas, Colorado, Nevada, Washington, and California. Dad and Bessie were on the road a great deal.

Returning to His Roots

During their years together Dad and Bessie made numerous excursions to St. Anthony, Idaho, where Dad's roots were deeply planted. Most of his surviving family members still lived in the Upper Snake River Valley, where St. Anthony is located, and were getting well along in years. Dad felt a need to keep in touch as their failing health (and his) made moments spent together more precious.

Beloved relatives they made a point of visiting included: Bert and Vera Loveland (Dad's sister and her husband); his niece Bernice Wright (a daughter of his sister, Merlie); another niece, Damaris Clark (also one of Merlie's daughters) and her husband, Vernon; Myrtle Davis (the widow of Dad's brother, Wayne); and Blaine and Alice Singleton (yet another niece, a daughter of Dad's sister, Leatha).

The following two Flashbacks, "Two Silly Dreams" and "The Rude Red Rooster," contain references to several of these Davis relatives.

Trisha Bird, her grandfather Versal L. Davis, his niece Damaris Olsen Clark, and her husband Vernon Clark at the Clark home in St. Anthony, Idaho, April 1988.

Dad and Bessie invited Trisha, a BYU student at the time, to join them on one of their many visits to St. Anthony. Dad enjoyed showing Trish important, old, family sites and introducing her to the Clarks and other family members. Damaris Clark was one of Dad's sister Merlie's daughters who grew up with him on the old home ranch. The Clarks frequently visited us in Logan over the years. They were among our oldest, most continuous family friends. (Bessie took this photo.)



Two Silly Dreams

(Flashback. Journal IV. p. 164)

Bessie and I had listened to the regular presentation of the news as seen on TV one evening in July 1987. The time was now about 10:30 p.m.

The accounts included the true story of some intense storm damage to some crops in the Salt Lake area. After learning of this, Bessie and I simply went to bed as usual. But I must have been thinking of the devastation involved.

In my dream I was on a hiking trip in some high mountains, which overlooked a small city and a long, narrow valley. This setting was similar to Logan and Cache Valley. I dreamed that Mom was with me and we also had two small children with us. The two kids, however, were not any of our own.

We had walked and climbed a ways along the steep mountainside when it grew dark and we came to a small cabin. The semi-darkness was caused by a huge dark cloud, which had covered the entire valley. I elected to stop and partake of the refuge from the impending storm, so we entered the vacant cabin.

After having done so we all spread individual sleeping bags on the floor. Thelma and the kids layed down on their separate bags. I went to the open door and looked out upon the valley as the town rested within such. There was a long, well-defined street running lengthways of the city and also through the narrow valley. I watched a while as a large cloud continued to form over the street.

I then went back to my sleeping bag and tried to relax but could not. So I returned to view the valley again. I then saw the most incredible sight as I witnessed the following:

The large and forbidding cloud had turned into a well-defined cyclone. It coursed down the open street as it headed out into the open valley. The amazing part was that it was being towed along by a huge Clydesdale horse, which was firmly harnessed and hooked to a long rope attached to the narrow funnel of the cyclone. A man was whipping the animal as it progressed in huge steps toward the open valley.

I feel I must record a real-but-unreal dream I had last night (March 16, 1988). I am concerned a bit because the incident could reflect the possibility I am becoming a bit senile, but anyway, here goes:

I dreamed I was a young man about 12 years of age and I was among a huge group of singers as in a choir. I was supposed to say a fitting word now and then to add to the vocals. At the end of a phrase I loudly said, "Quack, Quack." Then at the end of another short vocal I was supposed to shout, "Toot, Toot." But I shouted, "Quack, Quack," again and I was publicly denounced for such.

In continuing the dream the scene changed and I was inside a long bus. I, at the back, and was playing with a rope lariat, which I threw up the aisle. I dreamed that Bert Loveland, my brother-in-law said, "Stop that."

I then said to myself, "I'll do what I please" whereupon, I started to cast another loop. He intercepted my hand and therefore stopped me. Then, when he lowered his hand, I cast the loop over his head. I then tied the loose end to my seat and ran. He tried to follow but came up short. I then started to laugh in my dream but in real-life, too, and was doing so when I awakened Bessie, who thought I was having a heart attack.

I laughed intermittently the balance of the night.

Dad's sister, Vera, and her husband, Bert Loveland, 1981.

By the time Dad married Bessie he and his older sister, Vera, were the only living siblings in a family of eight children. Vera Davis Loveland and her husband, Bert, were both extremely frail. Dad's remarks in his journal following several different St. Anthony trips indicated he expected he would never see them again in this life. However, they both hung on much longer than he thought they would. Vera finally passed away on 18 Nov. 1987 and Bert a year later on 29 Oct. 1988.



The Rude Red Rooster

(Flashback, Journal III, p. 175)

When Bessie and I were on our way north to Montana and northern Idaho we elected to visit with Bernice where she lives south of St. Anthony. We were very cordially invited to remain for the night. Bernice has been very thoughtful in all the years I've known her. Thelma and I chummed with her and Farrell for years and years. I've always felt comfortable around them. But now the story:

"You guys can sleep in this room where you always have," Bernie said to me.

"Well thanks, Bernice, I know where you mean," I replied.

So I directed Bessie into the large, high-ceilinged, quaint room. Our ordinary bed was provided with normal covers etc. We simply said goodnight to Bernice and then retired for the night. Sleep was normal and satisfying.

We were both sleeping very soundly when all of a sudden Bessie excitedly exclaimed," What was that noise?"

I was awakened by a very definite and unusual resonance also. But, quickly, I recognized the source of the racket.

I turned to Bessie and said," Don't let it alarm you, it is only an early rising farmyard rooster."

"But it must be in this room," She replied.

"I know it is close but actually the old cuss is just outside that open window," I said as I tried to quiet Bessie down.

I told her that Bernice's flock of chickens had ready access to the entire yard surrounding the home and other buildings. These colorful birds were Rhode Island Reds, a common strain of chicken. They are large red colored specimens and are also prone to spread out and explore.

It probably seemed appropriate to this large old rooster that we be awakened very early that morning. The alarm was extremely loud and I believe the old boy must have had a megaphone attached to his beak. And this was directed at our open window by which he resolutely stood. The feathered alarm clock was noisy but after all, how many people can claim such a distinct honor as to be awakened by such a creature?



Dad, Bessie and Dad's niece, Bernice Wright, 1987.

Bernice, who was near Dad's age and of the same jokester temperament, had always been one of his family favorites. Their close relationship had been cemented when they grew up together on the Davis ranch. As older teens they had chummed in the same group had ribbed each other constantly, and continued to remain close throughout their lives. Bernice died on 11 Sept. 1988. A week later Dad nostalgically wrote in his journal

Last Sunday I received word from Alice at St. Anthony that Bernice had died the night before. About a week ago she was here visiting us. And now at the time we lately lay on the Wilford Cemetery. It seems incredible. But such is life and death.

Bernice has always been a true friend and relative. Mother and I associated with her for 60 years or more. She was the one who arranged my first date with Thelma. I've been very grateful ever since.

Mistaken Identity

(Flashback. Journal Vol. IV. p. 170)

Oooh, Verse, that is nasty," Bessie exclaimed as she threw the covers back and quickly jumped out of bed. Her right hand was clasped over her mouth as she headed for the bathroom, a stringy sort of mucous was dripping from between her fingers.

We were in the home of Bessie's son, Sid, and his wife, Gloria, in Pocatello. They had left for a few days and Bessie and I were looking after matters while they were away.

Previous to this Bessie and I had been stricken with common colds. Our throats were still rather sore and we used common medications to help.

We had both retired in normal manner after which Bessie started coughing some. She reached to the head of the bed where she had placed a bottle of spray Chloraseptic.

She grasped the bottle and, without stopping, sprayed inside her mouth several times. It was then that she suddenly made the definitive remark at the beginning of this account.

After she returned from the nearby bathroom she re turned to the side of the bed where she had been at the time of the spray effort. She turned on the room light, then noticed what she had actually done.

There, on the bed, lay a bottle of Gloria's foot balm! It was in a similar container to Bessie's Chloraseptic. The two bottles had been placed together on the shelf at the head of the bed. Needless to say, I laughed intermittently the rest of the night. And eventually Bessie snickered, too.

Sid and Gloria Alvord and their daughter, Jennifer, on Dad and Bessie's wedding day, 20 Aug. 1985.

Sid (Bessie's only son) and Gloria lived in Pocatello, Idaho, during Dad and Bessie's four years together. Whenever the older couple traveled north they usually spent a day or two with the Alvords, who were gracious hosts.

This photo was taken inside Bessie's home. In the background a few antiques, which had been handed down through the Alvord and Glauser families, can be seen.



Staying Involved

In Oct. 1988, Dad was selected to serve as president of Chapter 466 of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) with Bessie as vice-president. They supervised planning and organizing of the group's meetings, events, and special functions.[47]

Dad noted in his journal on 6 March 1989:

My responsibility as president of the local Senior Citizen's group is progressing quite well and I feel pretty good about it. Our chapter membership is the highest (171) that it has ever been. I truly hope matters will continue to progress. I'll be singing a solo next week at a state convention to be held in Ogden. When will I stop doing such singing]?[48]

Dad's self-directed question reflected his mixed surprise-pleasure-apprehension regarding the ongoing invitations he received to sing solos at various functions despite his physical frailties. His journal entries during his last few years indicate he performed at funerals, sacrament meetings, senior citizen functions, wedding receptions, and missionary farewells.[49]

We all enjoyed feeding Dad's musical bent. He seemed to appreciate our gifts of audio tapes, cassette players, and boom boxes. He loved the "oldies" (30s and 40s music), Tabernacle Choir renditions, and classical compositions. His favorite TV programs (other than boxing matches — gag!!) were the long-running "Lawrence Welk Show" and "Sing Along with Mitch," an early 60s program, which featured Mitch Miller leading an all-male chorus and the home television audience in singing popular songs. A key feature of the community sing-along was a perky ball, which bounced along lyrics projected onto the bottom of the screen in time with the music.

Dad never warmed to "modern" music. In his opinion the music teens listened to wasn't music at all, but trash.

When I was a teenager in the 60s I was an active participant in "Beatlemania." I got caught up in the excitement and wanted to fit in with my friends, who were obsessed with the group. Dad loathed Beatle music, which didn't surprise me. But he also couldn't tolerate the singing of my true musical hero, mellow Andy Williams. If he walked through the room while I was watching my weekly Andy Williams television program, Dad would bruskly tell me to turn the volume down, that he didn't want to listen to it. I could never understand why. Perhaps he objected to my silly, teenage swooning more than the music itself.

Dad's lifelong love for and involvement with music culminated with his final church position — ward music coordinator, which required him to arrange musical presentations for sacrament meeting once a month. He mentioned in his journal this position represented *"more concern and effort than one usually knows about."*[50]

He and Bessie shared a love for singing in the ward choir and also enjoyed playing rousing harmonica duets together.[51] They provided great harmonica entertainment for our children when they came to visit.

Stroganoff Piano Concerto in C (Crossroads) Flat

(Flashback, Journal IV, p. 127)

Oh, I'm so sorry," I hurriedly exclaimed as I turned and attempted to arise from my seat. "Let me help you with that, Miss."

This was my apologetic remark to a very nice and attentive waitress, who, at this moment, was kneeling on the floor between me and a small upright piano nearby.

It all started when Bessie and I joined about 40 other senior citizens and boarded a rented bus in Logan. We traveled over Sardine Pass to Brigham City then to Ogden and continued north to an area east of Tremonton. There we stopped at the popular Crossroads Cafe and entered such to enjoy dinner in a special private room.

The service was excellent and the food was delectable as well. During the meal I was seated near a small open piano, which was placed in a corner of the spacious room. Bessie sat at my right and, directly across were Eloise Seamons and Nellie Olsen,

We exchanged conversation back and forth as we enjoyed being together. The meal of beef stroganoff was served followed by a dish of peach cobbler. I ate everything that was given to me plus part of Eloise's and Nellie's.

I was then simply wishing I had even more and I told the women of this. Then I thought I would try something!!

Eloise, lift your plate," I said. She obeyed immediately and I hid my empty dessert plate under hers. My eating area was now obviously empty and free of any plate or signs of previous service.

Then I said, "I'm going to tell the next waitress who goes by that I was overlooked and received no peach cobbler." The ladies around me were smiling and obviously were anticipating what the confronted waitress would say or do.

Then, looking across the room, I spied a waitress approaching with two trays of used dinner plates on board. These contained uneaten leftovers and were being taken from the room.

As the fast moving and efficient young lady came near me, I spread my arms around the empty area of the table in front of me and plainly but suddenly said, "Hey, young lady, you forgot to —" I got no farther with my statement as she excitedly threw her arms in the air. The dirty dishes tumbled from trays, falling on the piano keyboard and then to the floor. This caused a loud noise as the piano keys responded to the force upon them.

The young lady immediately knelt to clean up the mess and to also try to overcome her embarrassment. It was then that I said, "I'm sorry, etc."

She politely objected but I assisted in cleaning the piano and clearing the broken plates from the floor. She tried to smile but her apparent turmoil was hard to overcome.

But, finally, I succeeded in winning a cute smile from her when I firmly said, "Ma'am, I understand music quite well and I don't mean to be critical, but the concerto you played on the piano was just a little bit off key."

She then, with another waitress, laughed with the rest of us until we left the cafe. She was truly gracious.

Dad's Health Worsens

A year before his death Dad wrote in his journal: *My health is yet very uncertain but I suppose I must do what I can. Bessie has been very concerned about me and I'm deeply indebted to her. She is truly a remarkable woman.*

I'm trying to keep my optimism going by looking forward to about 10 months from now. That will be about Aug. 1 of '89. I am planning on going to Can-Al again. Time will tell.

Yes, still drawn towards Alaska, but knowing deep in his heart his declining health would never allow another such venture. His thoughts were also pulled towards Mom and where she dwelled — where he would soon join her. In March 1989 he pondered her nebulous state:

At times I think of Mom a great deal. I remember our very close relationship during our many years together. . . . However, I wonder about some things regarding her at this particular time. I search the scriptures and learn much but yet I wonder. Is she completely aware of mortal conditions as they take place among all of us who are still here? What is she doing at this time? Does she sleep, eat, rest? I'm sure she has deep peace of mind which she earned while in mortality. Also, I firmly believe she is preparing to greet me and usher me into the "new beginning." I'm actually looking forth to the time I can be reunited with her. It will truly be wonderful. I sincerely pray that Diety will forgive us both of some improprieties we experienced while together in mortality. Then she and I will be able to progress together in the promised exaltation level of immortality.[53]

His thoughts had reflected similar feelings in an earlier entry when he expressed: *I surely hope and pray that Mom is comforted [about members of the family]. It seems that I miss her physical presence more and more. The old adage that, "One never misses the water until the well goes dry," applies to my relationship with her. I try to placate my feelings by talking to her framed picture or by visiting her gravesite. But I know it is just a matter of time and then we will be together again, hopefully to never be separated again. At this time I really wish that I had expressed deeper love and consideration while she was here with me. I'll try to make it up to her at a later time.*[54]

Dad knew he was slipping ever further towards his transition from this world to the next. His health declined noticeably in the spring of 1989.

I've experienced some increased physical problems and I do not feel too well at this time, he wrote on 6 March. *My heart is definitely becoming more of a problem and my legs are more afflicted. Sleep is very difficult to obtain. However, I'm concerned about another matter — I now bleed some each time I urinate. I may have to see my doctor about this. I hesitate to do so because Im very tired of consulting with any doctor. I 've been to so many in the past 10 years and I would almost sooner let matters take their course and let me go. I feel I am ready to face that challenge.*[55]

Dramatically, Dad brushed the veil when his heart almost failed the first part of April. In noticeably shaky handwriting, he recorded on 14 April 1989:

I'm at a loss as to how to record this entry. The past two weeks have been so stressful and different that I hardly know how to commence.

However, in my last entry I indicated that I was experiencing more and more chest pain. Well this had increased until it became very urgent that I should go to the local hospital. On Tuesday the 3rd of April I was finally forced to instruct Bessie to take me to the emergency department of the Logan Hospital. I was immediately put under pain medication and then moved to the intensive care unit.

The five days I remained in the hospital are like a nightmare to me. I remember very little about the whole thing. But apparently my condition was very critical with only a 20% chance of survival. Because of the doctor's opinion the entire family was alerted by Bessie and Duane. All members came and remained for about 4 days.[56]

4 Crises in 2 Months

Our daughters, Trisha and Raquelle, were attending school at the BYU Jerusalem Center in Israel during the spring of 1989, when Dad became so critically ill. I kept them informed of his progress. Following are excerpts from a few letters. The first detailed his initial brush with death; the second (recorded on the next page) summarizes two more:

Monday, 10 April, 1989

I made a dash to Utah last Wednesday after a call from Dorothy alerting me to Grandpa Davis' critical heart condition. He had been taken to the hospital the previous day with uncontrollable "shakes." After some testing he was told his aortic valve (the main valve leading into his heart) was partially blocked and his prostate cancer was active again (had been for over a year without his knowledge). His doctor told Dad that once they began taking him off the life support systems he was on — he had four - he expected him to have a massive heart attack. He let Dad pick the day to begin withdrawal. He chose Thursday. So, all of us kids rushed to Logan to be with Dad during this critical time. He was in intensive care where visitors are usually limited but the doctor had left instructions to allow all family members free access to Dad. We camped at the hospital and visited with Dad between naps (his); the family waiting room bulged with Davis kin. Thursday was tense as we watched the nurses inconspicuously notch the various IV's down during the day, but as his life supports diminished, Dad's condition surprisingly improved. We were all amazed, the doctor included. By Friday Dad was flirting with the nurses and entertaining a steady stream of kids, grandkids and friends. The doctor couldn't see any reason to delay Dad's departure so he went home on Saturday, weak by without too much pain.

He kept apologizing for not dying because many of us traveled from far stretches to be there and those who lived nearby took most of the week off work. But we assured him we were thoroughly enjoying the impromptu family reunion and the bonus of his recovery. And enjoy it we did. We had several long card parties — one in which so many participated that Duane had to bring in a 4'X8' sheet of drywall and lay it on his kitchen table to accommodate the card playing crowd. My brothers and sisters and our spouses had lunch at a restaurant; some of us attended a temple session together; we shopped; we began new cross stitch projects together and made frequent trips to a wonderful malt shop. We also had a picnic at Merlin Olsen Park — dozens of grandkids and great grandkids were there.

Following this first emergency situation Dad wrote a general letter to the family, which reflected his tender consideration of financial and personal stresses inherent in several of our individual circumstances. In the letter he insisted we let practicality rule should another crisis arise. He wrote:

20 April 1989

Dear family

I compose this letter to all of you at this time. I want you to know that I deeply appreciated your being here when I was hospitalized. It all demonstrated your love and concern. I'm sure you will undoubtedly be blessed for having taken the time and resources to come.

But as I anticipate the future I wish to suggest a direction to all of you. Please consider this: I would prefer that you do not rush to Logan again. You proved your devotion recently and I'd prefer that you remain at your homes if such a condition arises again. I hardly knew you were even near to me. So next time wait until it is all over then do what seems appropriate. Such requires a great deal of financing and preparation and I don't think such would be justified again except to attend funeral services.

Come and visit any time you wish under ordinary circumstances. Bessie and I would be glad to see you.

Duane and Laurie [the only family members living in Logan at the time] *of course, would be near but the rest of you need not feel obligated to rush here.*

I sincerely hope and pray that my eventual demise will be

quick and positive but who knows?

We keep mindful of Bessie at all times. She is truly wonderful.

I love every one of you and I'm sure that Mom is entirely aware.

Please consider the content of this letter.

Deepest love, Pop

P.S. I'm feeling somewhat better at this time.

And other crises *did* arise, each ending with Dad cheating death one more time. In another letter to my daughters I wrote:

27 May 1989

Grandpa Davis is critically ill. He's been in the hospital twice since I last wrote — his heart! The last time he was so ill the doctor expected his death "any minute." He was ash gray and had no detectable blood pressure. Doctor Daines simply pumped him full of morphine to help kill the pain and waited. But your darned, gritty grandpa pulled out of it again!! What a rock he is. They decided not to keep him in the hospital, though. Dad wanted to go home. So a few days later (Sunday the 21st) Bessie (and LaVel, Lauris, Tami, and Duane) brought him home and made him comfortable. The doctor trained them all how to give Dad morphine shots. Other than sedatives, it's the only medication he's getting now. He's been taken off all his heart medications; there's no reason to continue taking them. Tami or one of my brothers is staying with Bessie most of the time to help take care of Dad. I've been in touch with them. Dad is too weak to walk and sometimes eat. He sleeps most of the time. With the morphine he's been fairly comfortable.[59]



Dad in his rented hospital bed at home, 5 Sept. 1989.

Slipping Away

Finally, under home hospice care, Dad was made as comfortable as possible in a hospital bed at home where he settled in waiting to die. His final journal entry, written on 31 May 1989 reads:

Since April 4 I have been hospitalized four times. Each was very critical and my life in mortality was very uncertain.

At this time I use very little heart medication and I face each day with uncertainty.

I don't really care very much but I wonder how long I will have to endure the pain and weakness.

Bessie has been very attentive and I love her for it. All the family have also kept close attention.

I have to use morphine quite often to control chest pain. Also, I use an oxygen pump most of the time.

Fishing season is open but I wonder if I'll be able to use my new license.

Yes, Mom, I'm probably going to be with you before very long.[60]

Over that long summer Bessie, Lauris and Duane — his main caregivers — fed him, bathed him, dressed him, and saw to his every need including giving him necessary morphine shots for pain. But even with the

shots, pain agonized his body and sapped his stamina during those final months at home. Day and night someone had to be by his side to sooth, turn, rub, clean, medicate, and reassure this man whose strength and vigor had been so awesome in his earlier years. The pain occasionally shortened his temper and loosened an unnaturally biting tongue. He deeply regretted his outbursts and mourned the constant help he required but was helpless to do anything about it. He yearned for it all to be over.

Constant caregiving was physically and emotionally exhausting for Duane and Lauris, who were also working full time, but helped out nights and weekends when they could. However, Bessie, who was with Dad every minute, was almost completely done in before the summer was over, not merely from lack of sleep, which was a big issue, but also from unrelenting worry and emotional strain.[61] By August it was obvious Bessie needed respite.

We each did what we could. Deb, in Texas, and myself, in Colorado, traveled to Logan to care for Dad for a week in September to give Bessie and the boys a needed break. Tami, a student at Weber State College, came when she could to give further assistance.

Soon, though, Dad needed full time professional care to give him the comfort, relief and safety he needed. In a family meeting held while Deb and I were in Utah, the decision was made to put Dad into a care center. Thus, he spent his final few weeks in Logan Valley Nursing Center located across the street from Logan Regional Hospital.

Tami said this was the only hospitalization in which Dad refrained from joking with the nurses. He was too ill. And increased pain medication faded his consciousness into blessed oblivion with only occasional, brief surges of awareness.[362]

Once, when he was somewhat alert, Corrette Spence, Dad's oldest granddaughter, told him she had brought her three little boys to see him. (Trevor, Derek, and Devan were sitting quietly — obediently — on a nearby empty bed.) She also told him she was going to have another baby. He perked up and replied, "Thelma, did you hear that? *Colleen* is having *another* baby!" Corrette tried to explain she wasn't Colleen at all, but Corrette; however, he remained adamant and happily continued to tell *Thelma* about the good news.[4]

On another occasion Corrette brought her brother, Lyle Davis, and cousin, Allan Davis (Brent's son), to pay their respects to their grandfather who had spent so much time fishing with them (especially Lyle). She said she felt great emotion as the two, big teenagers, one on each side of his bed, held his hands and quietly said goodbye to their Grandpa Davis.[63]



Deb, Dad, and Bessie at Tony Grove Lake up Logan Canyon, 8 Sept. 1989. I (Twila) took the photo.

During the week Deb and I helped Bessie take care of Dad, he obviously enjoyed our presence and expressed his love and gratitude many times. But he was in pain a great deal. We desperately tried to find things to distract him from his misery. When we suggested a ride up Logan Canyon his face lit up and despite the discomfort such a drive would produce, he eagerly agreed to go. So we spent a few hours driving in the mountains he loved so much. He reminisced, talked of times past, and soaked up the glorious fall sunshine. I'm sure he realized the short afternoon drive would be his last foray into the natural setting so dear to his heart. He soon tired and we headed back home, gave him a morphine shot, and settled him back into his hospital bed.

Dad's Passing

Our father, Versal LaVel Davis, died peacefully on Friday evening, 13 Oct. 1989, at Logan Valley Nursing Center with Bessie, Lauris, and Tami by his side. LaVel and Duane arrived shortly after his passing.

His funeral was held four days later on 17 Oct. in the Logan First Ward chapel. Dad was buried next to Mom in the Logan Cemetery — "a very sacred spot," as he frequently referred to it in his journal.




DAVIS



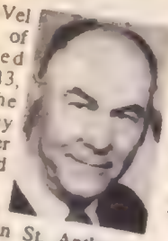


Part of the Versal LaVel Davis family gathered at Duane and Melanie's home — our old Davis family home — at 371 West 2nd South in Logan on the day of Dad's funeral, 17 Oct. 1989.

Page 4 — The Herald Journal Logan, Utah, Sunday, October 15, 1989

Obituaries

V. Davis



Versal LaVel Davis, 73, of Logan, died Friday, Oct. 13, 1989, at the Logan Valley Nursing Center after an extended illness.

He was born Oct. 18, 1915, in St. Anthony, Idaho, a son of John Gould Davis and Charlotte Alice McDaniel. He married Thelma Hall on Feb. 12, 1937. Following her death in 1985, he married Bessie Glauser Alvord on Aug. 20, 1985. Both marriages were solemnized in LDS temples.

A resident of St. Anthony, Idaho for 37 years and Logan for 37 years, he was active in Scouting and LDS Church activities at both locations. Before retirement, Mr. Davis was an employee of Ace Mill and Fixture Company in Logan. He and his first wife were active in ward and stake dance programs for many years. They also served as genealogy missionaries at the Logan Genealogy Library on the Maricopa Indian Reservation in Arizona. He also served in the baptistry in the Logan LDS Temple.

He is survived by his wife, Bessie, Logan; five sons, Clinton LaVel Davis, Woods Cross; Versal Brent Davis, Houston, Texas; Brian J. Davis, Federal Way, Wash.; Lauris Hall Davis and Duane McDaniel Davis, Logan; three daughters, Twila Davis Bird, Denver, Colo.; Tamara Davis Clark, Hyrum; Debra Davis Nelson, Austin, Texas; 29 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be Tuesday at noon at the Logan 1st LDS Ward Chapel, 89 S. 200 West, with Bishop Jay Schvaneveldt conducting. Friends may call Monday evening from 7-9 at the Allen-Hall Mortuary, 34 E. Center, and at the church one hour prior to services.

Burial will be in the Logan City Cemetery.

FUNERAL SERVICES FOR



Versal LaVel Davis

Born October 18, 1915, St. Anthony, Idaho
Died October 13, 1989, Logan, Utah
Tuesday, October 17, 1989 at 12 o'clock Noon
Logan 1st Ward Chapel
Bishop Jay Schvaneveldt Conducting

Dedication of the grave — Duane McDaniel Davis, son
Logan City Cemetery

PALLBEARERS

Clinton LaVel Davis	Travis Renard Bird
Lauris Hall Davis	Lee Kerrigan Davis
Duane M. Daniel Davis	Allen Ernst Davis
Brian J. Davis	Jared LaVel Clark

HONORARY PALLBEARERS

Mark Edward Howard	Sidney Allen Avery

Flowers cared for by the Logan 1st Ward Relief Society

Services

Family Prayer	Clinton LaVel Davis, son
Prelude & Postlude	Verna Gaddie
Vocal Solo	Sharee Clark, granddaughter Accompanied by Verna Gaddie
	How Great Thou Art
Invocation	Brian J. Davis, son
Obituary Tribute	Lauris Hall Davis, son
Speaker	Reed Johnson
Vocal Solo	David Edwards
Speaker	Loy Watts
Bishop's Remarks	Bishop Jay Schvaneveldt
Taps	Versal LaVel Davis
	How Firm A Foundation
Benediction	Tamara Davis Clark, daughter

Bessie's second widowhood matched her first one in length — 19 years! After Dad's death she lived independently until her early 90s. Then, as she became more frail, her daughters cared for her in their homes. She was one month short of her 95th birthday when she died on 27 June 2008. Not only did she bless her own family during her long, eventful life, she also enriched her step-family. We'll always love her for her warm outreach to us and her tender devotion to Dad. We're proud to have had Bessie as our beloved step-mom and as an example of how good a golden-age marriage can be.

Bessie — widowed for the second time — and me, in front of the home she rented after selling the "Alvord Home," which she had lived in most of her adult life, the home she and Dad had shared during their four-year marriage, August 1991.





Chapter Thirteen

Reflections

VLD
CS



As Dad's posterity increased, his sense of stewardship as the "family patriarch" also expanded. During his later years he composed a number of general letters to the family offering counsel based on reflections from his own life experience. I've chosen a handful of his messages to include here. I've also included a few insights from Mom as well as a poignant example of how they worked out differences between themselves.



Opposite: Our home, Dec. 1965.
Right: Mom and Dad, 1974.

To All of Ours

(Letter dated January 1977)

This is intended as an open letter to all members of the family.

I have often thought in the past few years that I should compose this directive to you. As I reach the latter years of a very satisfying life here, I realize that if I wait much longer my opinions may be flavored with conditions of senility. Therefore, at this time, when I feel I have a true balance of thought and judgment, I write this to you.

I don't intend this to be a nostalgic, doom-impending, critical document. Rather, I want you to regard it as a written summary of some of the important aspects of living and working together to attain a grand climax at the end of this mortal probation. This is a brief interim of existence, which is common to all of us and so the conditions of behavior in it are applicable to all.

I don't expound this in a critical atmosphere of thought — but rather, that you will reflect upon what I suggest and act constructively to improve your lives to your utmost ability.

I join with your mother in saying that we are proud of 99% of all you have done. The 1% is left for you to wonder about. Seriously, however, we have never regretted having fostered any of you and we look with great pride upon you.

Certainly many things have influenced our lives to this point, but we, with you, have been able to capitalize on the portion that has been for our betterment. Personally, I feel very grateful for answer to supplication in your behalf. You have responded wonderfully in most cases.

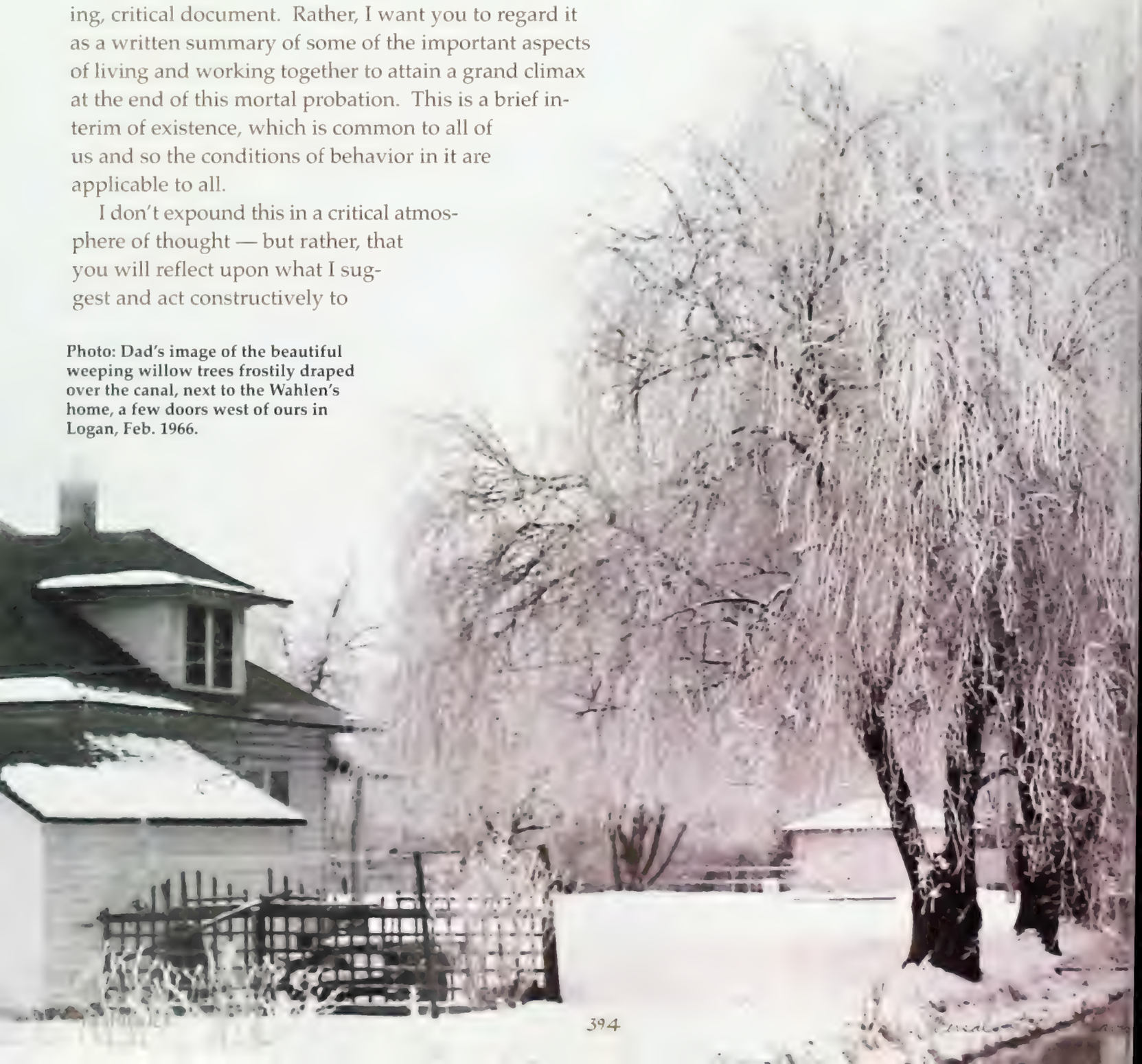


Photo: Dad's image of the beautiful weeping willow trees frostily draped over the canal, next to the Wahlen's home, a few doors west of ours in Logan, Feb. 1966.

I am not going to itemize the do's and don'ts of life. You know as well as I what they are. However, a reminder or two of a subtle nature should not be amiss.

I am at a milepost in life where and when I can evaluate quite clearly what has already transpired and what will surely come to pass in the not too distant future. I do not regret this nor regard it with sadness or foreboding. I just see conditions as they actually exist and how they will most surely affect the future. I don't fear this at all! In fact, I anticipate the new existence, which will follow. If I knew for a certainty that no chair around our family table would be empty, then I would be eager to go and prepare for all of you. But the consummation of this joy is dependent upon the conduct of all of us. Surely, to this end we must direct all our efforts mentally, morally, physically, and of course, spiritually. I'm depending upon each of you to reach for me in case I falter a little too much. Very likely, your mother will be reaching down for all of us.

I'm glad that each of you has and is responding to effort on your own behalf. Some of you were, perhaps, a little indignant because your mother and I refused to subsidize you financially after your high school years. I'm sure that, by now, you realize the great pride of self accomplishment. This is a priceless gift and does not come easily. It has been heartwarming to see each of you rise to the challenge and excel in many ways. Just don't let this sense of accomplishment destroy your gratitude in recognizing the conditions, which made your successes possible. Also, do not let any financial affluence wipe out the understanding and appreciation of the basic bulwarks of life and living. Never underestimate the power of Satan to disillusion you by the power of your own success or adversely, by the power of failure.

Certainly religion must be the balancing factor in all that you do. Without it, no plan of life is complete and is, therefore, worldly. We are here to enjoy the uplifting things of the world and to fashion the physical objects around us to promote man's purpose for being here. However "worldly" people have desecrated, ruined and hopelessly changed many of the formerly beautiful parts of the world. This is sad, yet there are still many wonderful places and objects about us. To these we must add the worthwhile creations of man. And man, when thoughtful, can do great things.

Mortality, through the years, has reached very morbid lows. This condition will always create retrogression in all phases of man's advancement, both physically and spiritually. To be able to withstand such trends is bewildering considering the many ways it is thrust upon us. Only strong religious convictions and personal integrity can resist and oppose this tide of evil that has almost constantly plagued mankind. However, a strong desire for right can effectively counter this, especially when fortressed by the knowledge of spiritual justice when this interim of life is over.

Be ever mindful and helpful to all around you. This is difficult to implement for the masses but by being considerate to a few individuals, a great lesson is carried to all who learn of it. We are here to assist each other and so no man can truly be an island. The Lord expects service as well as obedience and this service can be in many forms. You can judge this and act accordingly.

We live in a world of money and material things. Wealth is necessary to a point, but to spend years trying to acquire more than is needed is folly in its worst form. Money and all that it acquires will hardly be a determining factor when we reach the other side. There and then we will surely learn that service, love,

obedience, and tolerance will be the main requirements to receive any reward that is earned. Most of us are very prone, in this mortal existence, to dedicate our lives and energy to acquiring "things" in life. I realize, to an extent, some are necessary and normal, but we must recognize a stopping place somewhere. We often devote our time and resources to acquiring these things at the expense of our own wellbeing or that of our families. You will recall that President McKay said, "No success in life will compensate for failure in the home." As time goes by I more fully understand this truth.

So in your quests for the material riches of this world, I advise you to be thoughtful of your family welfare from a spiritual standpoint. Be mindful of the "Eternal Now" rather than the "Present Now."

It is my sincere desire to write of something else that may or may not occur. It is — if I go before your mother, I implore each of you to be very mindful of her. I don't believe she would ever be happy in a rest home. Neither would I if I still had the mental capacity to understand. However, this could change, but whatever, make no drastic move without prayer and much thought. Your mother and I both believe that the responsibility of taking care of the elderly rests upon the family, both financially and physically. This process is part of the gospel and to deviate without great cause is wrong and will ultimately have to be reckoned with. I don't stress this for our sake but rather for your own growth and development.

It is also our desire that any physical objects we leave behind are to be divided among you. This must be done in a spirit of cooperation and thoughtfulness. We really don't expect to leave much of value anyway, except our records, which we pray will be kept and preserved by all of you. Certainly we hope to be remembered more for what we were than for what we had.

All of you are urged to try and rear your own children as we have meant to rear you. We have made many mistakes, but none were intentional. Just remember you are nurturing treasured spirits of our Heavenly Father and any willful neglect will be reason for severe judgment some day.

Be thoughtful, understanding, and loving to your companions. Mom and I love every one of them and this letter is meant for their consideration as well as any. After all you, together, are "one."

Prayerfully,
Your Dad
D.T.D.



Large Photo: Dad's photograph of our street looking east towards snow-capped Mt. Logan, 1966.

Inset Photo opposite page: Dad's photo of the Logan Temple, 1969.

Church & Final Attitudes

(Dad's journal, 1987, Vol. IV, p. 149)

Admittedly there has been a great change in my life regarding the evolution of Christian thinking. I was born within the Church and also lovingly reared in a Christ-like home.

But like many, I felt the need to try and test life and then determine my own thoughts about the religious complexities of our existence here. I found out that all the training my parents and others had given me was very similar to what I now have decided is worthwhile.

This determination proves that religious truth does not change. It is a bulwark of strength, which can always be depended upon. Finding out for myself has only proven to me that true religious testimony can be obtained early in life if we will just permit it to enter our minds.

I am eternally gratified that I do have a deep and knowing testimony at this time. I have the positive knowledge that I will again be with Mom and others of my family. This conviction is absolutely priceless to me as it keeps me tuned in to life here yet in mortality.

I, of course, have some mental anguish when I learn of disturbing problems within the family. However, I take great comfort in knowing that sincere effort and humility can be the saving influence in the lives of any concerned.

Mom left this mortal existence with great faith and testimony. She was very repentant of any wrongs, which she may have committed. Her final thoughts were of joyful progression in the next existence. She truly is and was worthy of such. I live now trying to be worthy of her so we, together, can continue on in trying to obtain the great rewards of Celestial Glory.

I'm sure that if we could fully visualize the joy and happiness of extended glory, we would be most willing to endure any and all negative experiences in mortality which might phase us. This insight into the rewarding future becomes more and more positive as true testimony grows within the individual mind. No wonder that Mom was smiling when she took her final breaths. She, no doubt, was privileged to visualize what the future had to offer her, and, hopefully, me.

So, I record here, that life here, in mortality, is not always easy or apparently rewarding. But the attitude one maintains is the determining force, which will frame one's existence in the life to come. All righteous endeavor will ultimately be rewarded. So, as I've said before, try, try, try.





Mom's Ability to Adapt

(Flashback. Journal IV. p. 152)

As I reflect back over the 48 years that Mom and I spent together, I can't help but think how she was able to adapt to any worthwhile circumstance. However, if something was not proper according to her thinking, she would not concede.

I recall that in our courting days she would not be influenced by improper drinking or smoking. Yet, she quickly joined me and others if we had plain, good fun. She was a joy to be around.

In our early years of marriage we were both required to adjust to each other. She was usually more able to do this than I was. 1 know a great deal of love, understanding, and patience was required.

She also had to become used to ranch and farm life. This was very different [from what she was used to] and needed willful effort to adapt. But she very ably did so.

When we moved from the ranch to St. Anthony, she again simply but positively did all that was necessarily needed. This same procedure took place once more when we moved to Logan. This was a major transition but I did not have to do it alone. She helped and aided in every way she knew of.

I was and am an outdoor individual. I loved camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, etc. She soon adapted to all this and became an enthusiastic partner in all such activity. As time progressed, our family grew and consideration had to be shown in this respect. Mom was truly a commendable mother and companion as she effectively included this expansion.

She was never demanding so far as things of the world were concerned. She learned quickly to pattern her life to coincide with the finances available. This sometimes was very demanding but she again adapted and, eventually, we together won.

Fun and recreation were important in our lives together. She would join others as we participated in dancing, music, plays, church-oriented activities, civic functions, and neighborly get-togethers. She was always able and courteous.

I wish I could duplicate her ability to withstand unwelcome stress. Family problems would cause her to have deep concern but she was always able to build up a pillar of strength to combat such. Her religious beliefs were very, very certain and I feel this was an adaptation, which became very precious to her.

In all ways she demonstrated great practicality. All was done with the idea in mind of furthering the deep love and usefulness of our lives here together and also in the great hereafter.

I sincerely pray that those of us who remain in mortality will not underestimate her great worth and detract from the choice legacy she left us.

Compromise

Mom's journal, 15 Feb & 4 March 1983

Versal and I had a little tiff last nite: he says all my thots are toward our mission and I bypass the long-postponed Alaska trip. But we were able to talk it out this morning. I guess I'm what Deb says: "Too holier-than-thou, too intensely religious.

Dad's photo taken from our driveway, looking across the street, 1983.



Dad and Mom, 1984

One of my loves is to study the gospel, especially together, but no way can or will Versal pin down to a daily or even systematic schedule of study. It's a when-he-feels-like-it thing, usually a couple of times a week; sometimes to appease me when we've had a spat, he'll even offer to study with me.

Maybe I am too dogmatic, too deadly serious about this life, but my — our — turn on earth is fast running out. However, Deb has severely criticized me as well as Versal. And I'm sure other members of the family feel the same way.

Versal's passion is nature — the great outdoors, fishing. And my feelings for that are about like his for studying, writing, etc. Occasionally is fun — more is too much. Certainly he's a lot more fun to be around than I am. Neither of us seem able to change. I guess we're too old. Yet early in our married life we resolved some differences by a compromise: each of us got to choose 2 or 3 things he really liked to do and the other agreed to uncomplainingly participate. Thus, I learned to fish and hunt; Versal learned to dance and play games.

Of course, dancing and hunting have now gone past our capabilities.

Conflict Resolution

(Mom and Dad's Letters, 1973)

In the summer of 1973, Dad and Mom had a serious disagreement regarding whether Mom should work or not, an issue which had been simmering for a long time.

Six years earlier she had returned to college to get her bachelor's degree in English, which she obtained in June 1969. She then went on to pursue her master's degree. The goal was for her to finish her education then begin teaching either high school or college English to help ease their financial concerns.

As she approached the conclusion of her classwork for her master's degree, Mom attended a lecture, which marked a significant turning point for her. At the LDS Institute on campus at Utah State University, a General Authority (I think it was Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) spoke about priorities and working mothers. He specifically mentioned the critical importance of nurturing mothers (and grandmothers!) in the daily — hourly — lives of children. He might as well have been talking privately to Mom for then and there she changed course. She decided that, instead of teaching, as she had planned, she would turn her full attention back to her family. Though she was close to getting her master's degree, she chose not to finish. And not to work!

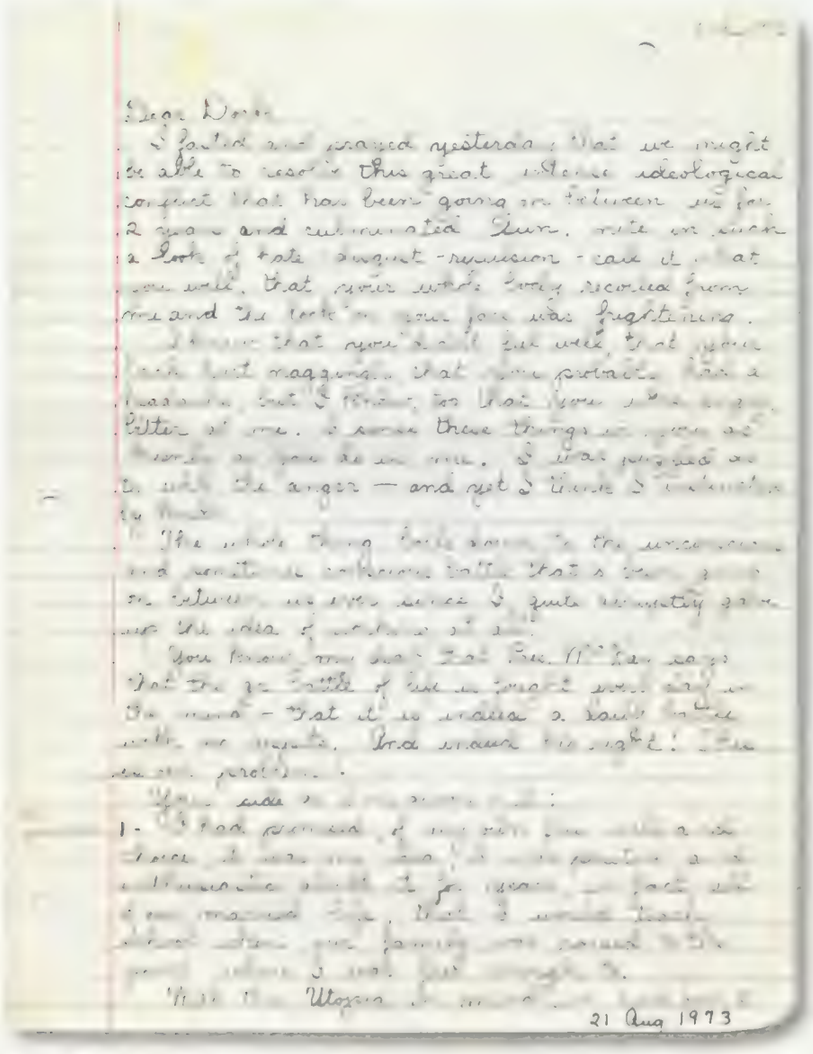
For the next few years as Dad's health worsened, his financial worries heightened and his temper shortened. The work topic grew to be a frequent source of marital discord. Finally, in August 1973, the simmering, unresolved employment issue came to a head and a heated argument ensued.

Mom and Dad were both strong individuals with iron wills. They didn't argue often but when they did, it was a doozie. This argument was one of their worst. And it took a long time for the dust to settle.

To try to address the matter in a less confrontational manner, Mom resorted to writing Dad a long letter. It gave her a way to sort out and organize her feelings and communicate them in a non-rancorous way. She carefully outlined "your side" and "my side" then left the letter with Dad to read and digest in private. He wrote his own letter in response five or six weeks later.

Mom and Dad's poignant letters allowed each other thoughtful, private, prayerful moments of meditation — non-pressured time — to read and digest each other's words before mutually resolving the matter. And they did resolve it. Thereafter it was a non-issue.

Mom's 9-page letter to Dad is shown on the next few pages. His tender 3-page response follows. The letters provide evidence of their profound, mutual devotion despite occasional disagreemen



Dear Don-

I fasted and prayed yesterday that we might be able to resolve this great internal ideological conflict that has been going on between us for 2 yrs - and culminated Sun. nite in such a flash of hate & anger - rejection - call it what you will. That never with such force & violence from me and the look in your face was frightening.

I know that you'd tell me well that you've been unhappy that I'm probably not a good housewife, but I think, in that case you'd be happier if I were. I know these things are part of me. I was pushed as far as I can be in me. I was pushed as far as I can be in anger — and yet I think I retained my dignity.

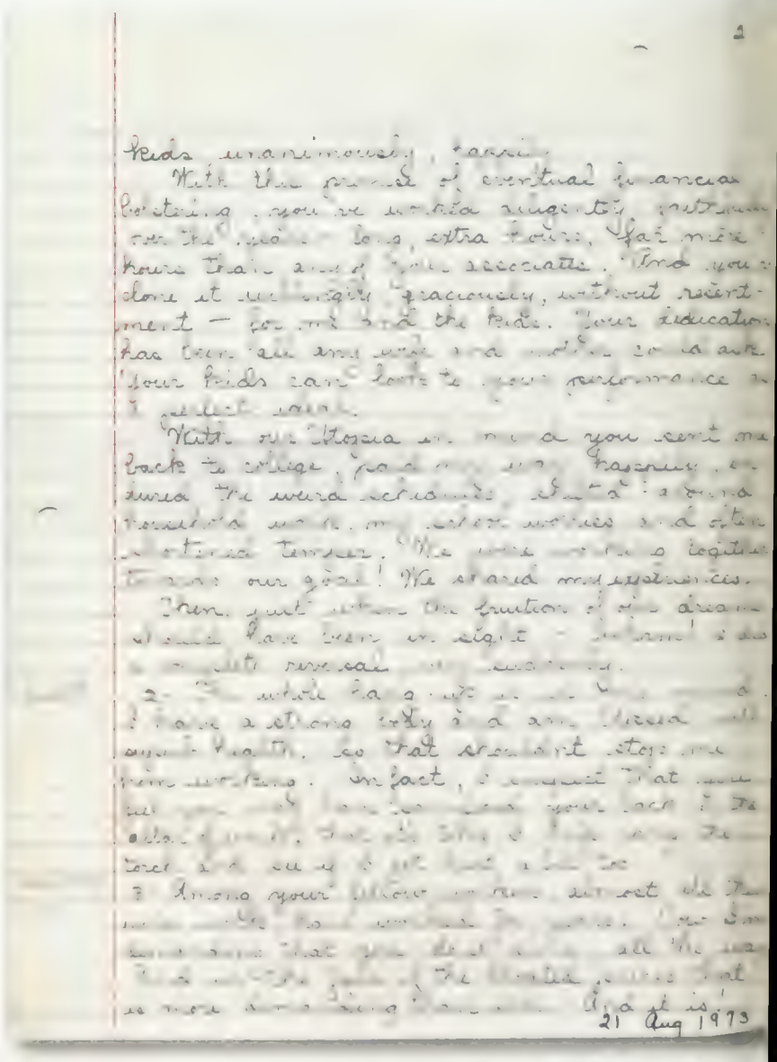
The whole thing boils down to the unresolved conflict we have within that is in us & in between us ever since I quit teaching & we had the idea of children & I.

You know you don't like it. You'll say: that the problem of me is that I'm not what you want - that it is wrong & bad in me with my needs. I'm sure I'm right! The problem.

You see a [illegible]:

1- I had promised & you were [illegible] I was [illegible] & you promised [illegible] for you. In fact all of your married life, that's what I've been [illegible] your family was raised & the [illegible] I was [illegible] enough.

21 Aug 1973



2

kids unanimously, I am.

With the prospect of eventual financial security, you've wanted security, retirement, more [illegible] extra $, that more $ than I associate. And you've done it unselfishly, graciously, without resentment — for me & the kids. Your dedication has been all encompassing & [illegible] your kids can't be your performance [illegible] perfect saint.

With our Utopia in mind & you sent me back to college, [illegible] I was pushing, encouraging the weird schedule. I'm a [illegible] nervous wreck, my writing suffers & often [illegible] tension. We were working together to our goal! We shared misgivings.

Then, just when the fruition of our dream should have been in sight - [illegible] & you [illegible] revealed [illegible]

2- The whole [illegible] I have a strong body & am [illegible] health, so that shouldn't stop me from working. In fact, I suggest that [illegible] your face! I'm [illegible] I'm [illegible] & I'm [illegible] I know your [illegible] that you [illegible] all the [illegible] I'm [illegible] that is more [illegible]

21 Aug 1973

4. You are realistic and a handy man to facts and realize that I have my chances of teaching because [illegible] But your common sense tells me that with my ed., health etc. I could get a job.
5. The ed. bit is a strong piece [illegible] it's the one thing you've been [illegible] ful, sometimes bitter about. I mean the fact that you didn't get to go to college ed. because, your mind is so good, certainly better than many who have more.

21 Aug 1973

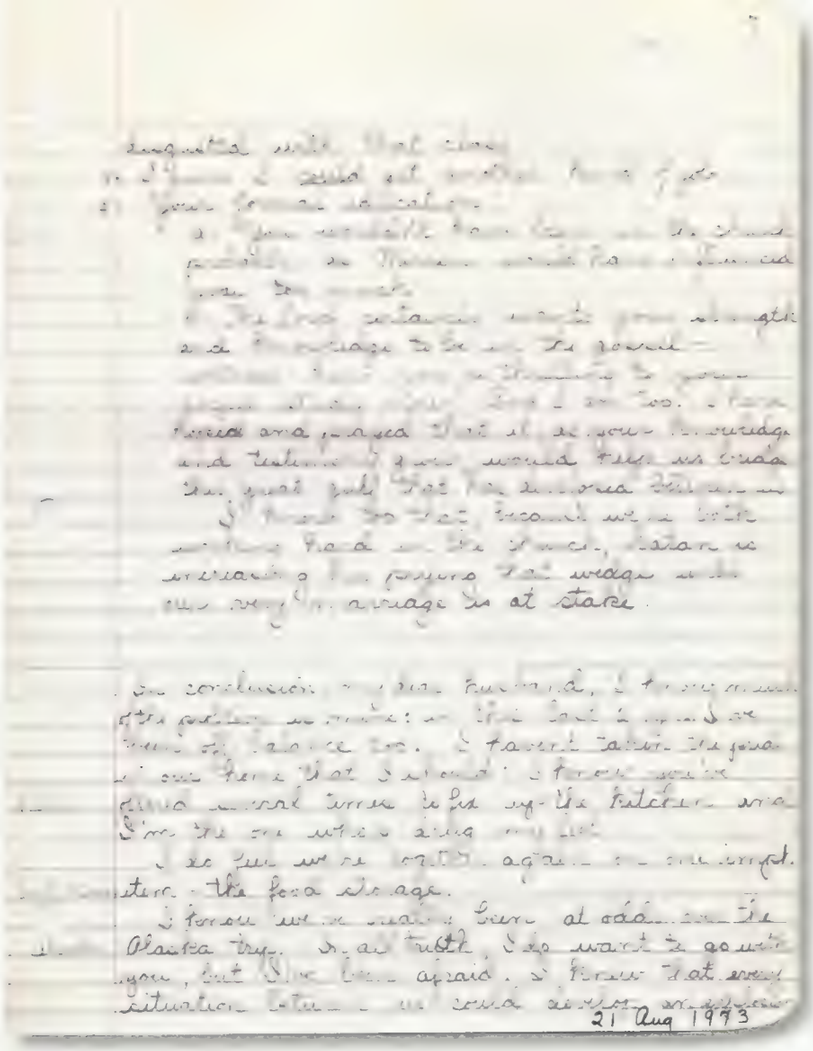
Thanks:
1- I like to start with the [illegible] your comments - my decision not to work. And as I look at it now, it was [illegible] never over. The very fact that we'd always been so wide in other areas [illegible] and a false sense of security, a failure that because I'd been correct in the idea you were to be too. I've been so critical that I've avoided your work for 2 years; I've [illegible] that writers should be in the forefront of [illegible] Perry Lewis work and a dozen [illegible] writers. The trial as a decade has [illegible] I've felt critical of women's work especially [illegible] Where were we [illegible] at least in area [illegible] and felt guilty on your [illegible] I've felt: I'm not [illegible] the ed. [illegible] of the Bible as the right [illegible] new Prophets. They're putting the acquisition of things as more important. [illegible] an animal but [illegible] to create a life, how [illegible] and the tradition [illegible] more unless it is a [illegible] necessary because of our health + wealth.
The Prophets talk and [illegible] that all the ills [illegible] our Am. society are traced to [illegible] Workers: juvenile [illegible] and [illegible] Government since the [illegible] enclosure [illegible] of the pillars that supports [illegible] most powerful, but it is just one of several.
Mr. Turnbull says [illegible]

21 Aug 1973

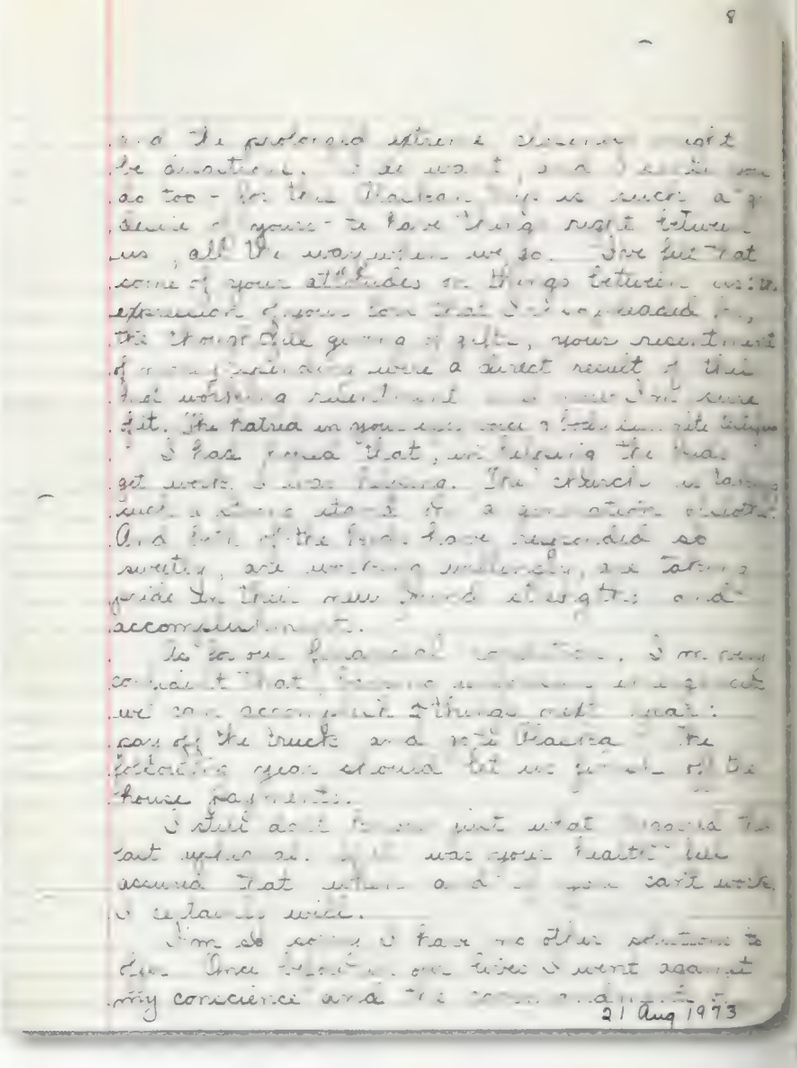
child until he is 7, and then do with him what you will ..." my thoughts [illegible] to Brent and Brian. Vera! There were the 2 who were stunted by as I worked that 3 years in El S. I've asked myself again and again "is this where we lost them? was it ... just "[illegible] and?" "Here's the first 2 who didn't have me at home, and most of the time we've been so young. Brad Duane and Deb are the other 2. Duane, tho' Duane was 5 but gone since then. And this has been [illegible] the second verse of our 2 years [illegible] a fifteen since I decided [illegible] has certainly provided a most clouded [illegible] tive barometer to our [illegible] 2- The health facts [illegible] work.
3- I guess I've already [illegible] but. The decisions are [illegible] responsibility for mine. I [illegible] but somewhat influenced [illegible] from Vera & Brad working [illegible] Kolesi: "Don't [illegible] start the [illegible] a word for a [illegible] Brian [illegible] like we [illegible] working... Brian [illegible] words [illegible]

21 Aug 1973

[illegible] what I [illegible] never start ... I [illegible] to do [illegible] about [illegible] [illegible] I V [illegible] don't have [illegible] don't have [illegible] here with [illegible] Dr [illegible] that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]



21 Aug 1973



21 Aug 1973



21 Aug 1973

A Few Notes of Explanation Regarding Mom's letter:

Page 7: The "Warren" Mom refers to was Dad's oldest brother, who he loved dearly. Warren "went east" to attend college and embark on an academic career. He obtained a doctorate degree and became a philosophy professor at the University of Buffalo in New York. Though his accomplishments were admired by his parents and siblings, he remained far from them in distance, life style, and religious beliefs for the rest of his life.

Pages 8-9: It would be interesting to know what issue Mom is referencing with her phrase, "once before in our lives." She doesn't explain. However, she mentioned to me on several occasions her regret (guilt?) at not having more children right away after Brian was born. (There's a five year gap between him and me.) I sensed she felt like she and Dad were deliberately going against the Lord's wishes at that time. My siblings may have other theories; it's pure speculation on all our parts.

A Word of Introduction to Dad's letter:

Dad didn't respond in writing to Mom's letter for a number of weeks. She spent part of the interim with us in California at the time of Tiffany's birth and while she was gone, Dad wrote her the tender love letter pictured on p. 242, a letter with no whiff of discord. However, I'm certain the lingering "Mom-won't-work" issue remained unresolved until Dad had taken plenty of time to mull things over (with Mom's lengthy letter in hand) and had prayerfully sorted out his feelings (and priorities). When he finally composed his written response the matter was put to rest.

Oct 73

Dear Thelma,

It is too bad that I have to use this method to converse with you - but when we try to reason together it seems that error is increased. But I believe a thought or two are worth bringing out.

One - your working - Honestly, after many years of planning, I was somewhat indignant about your preference of not working. But this feeling subsides almost completely when I am quite optimistic about our financial future. In fact, I almost look forward to the realization that I've paid all the way by myself. It is only at times when the future looks somewhat uncertain that I have a renewal of my first thoughts about this. Frankly, Mother, I really don't expect or want a pile of material wealth, now or later. I only become concerned about my waning ability to provide. I am not better about this - as I know it is associated with older ages but it is part of my make up I guess to worry. After all it is for you and ours.

Looking into the possible future, I frankly believe that things will eventually level out. It may take untiring cooperation from both of us but within my heart I feel this can be. I'm sorry I intimated that your dad not offered the help of - I became necessary - you have, only not nearly

Oct 1973

Is it my attitude at times - You must realize that I spend 5½ of my waking hours doing the same thing over and over, day after day, year after year. When the continuity is present I regard my work rather than the unglamorous condition in which I labor. But when things start to slow I then tend to invest my thinking which develops a negative point of view. I suppose I must broaden my work horizons to more favorably present a more pleasant aspect or general change seems to come painfully at this time of life but if I face the facts perhaps it might not be so bad. However there is where you must try even harder to help me readjust to new situations. Don't worry about my effort I shall always try and give you love. If I fail it is for it will probably work out better than we ever expect.

Another thought - You intimate at times that perhaps I don't have the love for you that I once did. Well I still love you just as much and a lot more. It is a more serious type of thing now - but have no fear I love you dearly. Sometimes think we are together so much that we perhaps don't appreciate each other as much as we should. ~~Perhaps~~ Perhaps this is true but I somehow don't want to change our present relationship.

Oct 1973

Do really enjoyed and loved you for your manner in almost all that I do. Your instinct helps me grow in a time in many ways but not so far as you are concerned I think you know this.

Now back to your plans of working - I suggest that you only outlook the field to the extent that of need you can more ably assist. By this I mean perhaps investigate the tutorship angle first. I'm sure, unless the roof really caves in, that only part time assistance would be necessary. I'm not implying that you work at this time, but only become prepared if it becomes needful.

Another thought Christmas - I will find our family circus discussion regarding this should be observed. As far as finances are concerned I believe that we can manage about $150 out of savings after paying taxes. I have planned personally but we could afford that amount. That is I think. This and taxes will just about leave our savings at the same amount.

Well my son, please be patient with us and don't give up. I realize on the go the long run that I have in store for you and me.



Dad and Mom, 1972

A Matter of Finances

(Dad's journal IV. p. 48-50 — 27 Mar. 1987)

I've often had occasion to wonder if I should express to all of you a matter which concerns us all. Simply, it is about finance.

First, however, I firmly state that I am not aiming at any one of you. Almost all of you have been involved in the process as I will relate. I very definitely want you to know that I do not worship money. That feeling has not existed for many, many years. But I do know that finance is very necessary to balance our lives in the common sense of the word. It is about such that I wish to make the following remarks.

Your Mom and I managed to provide for all of you until your eventual leaving the home. It was not easy but it was rewarding. All of you know that this was done on an income of a very nominal amount. It took extreme adherence to our budget which she and I initiated many years ago. But it worked out as we resolutely paid our tithing, a small amount into savings, our house payments, living costs, missionary expenditures, and many other finance-oriented needs.

We were able to manage all this without help from others. It, of course, required extended consideration as we thought of future needs.

I'm sure all of our lives are different but basic responsibilities are similar. Now comes what I desire to inform you about. Your Mom & I developed a sacred and precious independence which has been a rewarding part of our common lifestyle.

Many of the family have relied upon Mom's and my savings to supposedly help you manage your finance needs. Most of this was used properly but yet some, I feel, was not justified. So, who won? I leave the determination of this answer to you. Please do not think I am being critical, I just desire all of you to try and realize that self-preparedness is vital and needful.

Your Mom & I did not seriously need the finances which we let you have. But the question arises — Was it judicious? At this point in my life I still have sufficient to handle normal needs. But I simply cannot continue to allocate funds to any of you and still maintain the precious independence which I still have.

I certainly do not mean to be unduly miserly but I honestly feel that a deeper consideration is needed by many of you. After all, after marriage you are expected to manage for yourselves. I will still do all I can to help any of you if the need is extreme and justified.



Many of you suppose that Bessie and I have plenty but such is not the case. We budget very closely to make our social security money go as far as necessary. Any money which is utilized for the benefit of family members is taken from separate individual savings accounts which each of us have.

My funds are yet sufficient and I'm going to try and keep them so. However, I again state that I will assist any of you if your need is valid.

I have not disclosed to any of the family what any o you have been given. It is very confidential. I do



Dad and Bessie's home at 325 West Center in Logan.

promise all of you that if you seriously consider and plan your future financial possibilities and responsibilities that you will be rewarded as needed. You will then obtain a great peace of mind.

I wish you well and I know you can obtain that precious feeling of accomplishment if you finally reach that point where you become reasonably independent of financial aid from others.

Be mindful of each other, however, and assist each other as needed. Above all, do not worship money or "things of the world."

Remember, Mom and I love every one of you.I can hardly wait until I'm privileged to be with her again. She was, is, and will be, very precious to me. Try, try, try to acquire the same.

I do record here also that Bessie is also a very considerate and choice companion. I'm sure your Mom approves of her and our temporary relationship.

Love most sincerely

Pop

Reunion Address

(Delivered at Grand Lake, Colorado — 8 July 1988)

At this particular and important time I now address all of you as if I were speaking not only by myself, but also for Mom, Bessie, and Bessie's eternal mate, Alan. It so happens that Bessie and I, who yet remain in mortality, agree wholeheartedly on the content of this message to you. I'm certain that Mom understands, as does Bessie's husband. Bessie and I do nothing intentionally to discredit our prior relationships with our promised and temple-covenanted companions.

Maintain Family Unity

Over the many years I have realized more and more the priceless value of family unity. This is a natural condition, which should be nurtured quite constantly by keeping direct contact with each other. By doing so we learn of the ongoing history of each other and then can act or react in suitable manner to assist each other. I feel that this contact has been fairly good in the past few years but occasionally, conditions have arisen, which few of you knew about. So, I say this, as this family organization grows, maintain close contact and try to share each other's burdens as well as joys. this will require giving and receiving. We are told that ultimately we will be greatly blessed for having done so.

Develop Christlike Attributes

We older people, who are the patriarchs and matriarch are desirous that all of you will live lives of unselfish credibility. This will involve being honest, helpful, loving, forgiving, studious, and many other virtuous facets of Christlike behavior. Never underestimate the power of Satan, as he will try to disillusion you and the claim you as his. Deep religious commitment is a must to be regarded very highly.



Seek Eternal Life

We are told in II Nephi 31:20 what we must do to inherit that priceless treasure of Eternal Life. I urge all of you to read and reread the passage, which says:

"Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of home, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."

One of our church authorities states this about the verse: *"This brief time away from our heavenly home and parents is a time when we are given our agency for the purpose of being tried and tested in every way. You should expect some down days and some hard tests. Learn from them. Grow from them. Be stronger because of them. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the pathway to hope that leads us back to our Heavenly Father and our eternal home. Listen to our Father's promise to us. With daily prayer, scripture study, and our feet firmly planted on the road to the celestial kingdom, we have a perfect brightness of home. There will be steep climbs ahead, but we are promised divine help all the way. So lift up your head and never, never, never give up."*

I firmly agree with the individual who composed these words.

No Fear of Death

Because of my testimony at this time, I have no fear of passing from this existence. I feel I will be able to progress with a mate who is waiting and preparing for my rejoining her.

Overcome Adversities

Pressures have and will appear during your mortality here. Meet them, overcome them, build beyond them. All this must be done in a togetherness way with husband, wife, children, or others. It can be done and any who try honestly and prayerfully will be rewarded far beyond their finite ability to understand at this time. As I have said, be forgiving, be helpful, and be loving.



Dad's photo looking across Cache Valley to the Wellsville Mountains on the west side from a vantage point high in the mountains on the east side. January 1966.

Never close the door when someone's help is needed.

Make Wise Choices

In the world today you are exposed to high levels of good and bad. I'm sure that you can identify most of these. Be very selective in your choices. Be sensible in evaluating to make certain all will be covered under a framework of true gospel knowledge. Beware of making such things as excess money, unneeded pleasures, and things of the world your gods of worship. If you honestly acquire such, then share with others. You cannot lose by so giving.

Peace of Mind

I have spent a lifetime, which you know a great deal about. As I stated, I have not acquired a perfect score. But I do have deep peace of mind. I firmly believe I will be able to progress in the next existence as promised in Alma 40:12. It states: *"And then it shall come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care and sorrow."*

This scripture is priceless to me now as I realize my probation here is near an end. My only regret is that I could have lived a more commendable life. But I know I will be richly rewarded for what I feel I have improved upon.

Counsel to the Young

I'd like to comment to those who are yet young and unmarried. I'm going to quote President [Ezra Taft] Benson, who states: *"You have been born at this time for a sacred and glorious purpose. It is not by chance that you have been reserved to come to earth in this last dispensation of the fulness of times. Your birth at this particular time was foreordained in the eternities. You are to be royal children of the Lord in the last days. Don't settle for less than the Lord wants you to be. Yes, give me a youth who loves home and family, who reads and ponders the scriptures daily, who has a burning testimony of the Book of Mormon. Give me a youth who faithfully attends church meetings. Give me a youth who is virtuous and who has maintained personal purity, who will not settle for less than a temple marriage, and I will give you a young man or a young woman who will perform miracles for the Lord now and throughout eternity."*

I want all of you to consider this message as having been inspired of Deity. Regard it very highly and pattern your life to justify the Eternal rewards as promised for compliance.

Follow Promptings from the Holy Ghost

Everybody has an inbuilt guiding light, which can direct each of us if we will allow it to do so. Regular and deep prayer can reveal to any of you the honest and beneficial desires of your heart. You must be consistent in this effort, however. Use deep Christ-like thoughts as you think and meditate. Such will ultimately reward you with the knowledge needed to implement the proper action to take.

Constant adherence to church obligations must be met. Proper deportment in the home, family love, wise consideration of others outside the family, and wise use of all resources are also very important.

Grow in Wisdom

You perhaps feel that I am being very demanding in much of what I say, but I can promise every one of you that as you adhere to honest advice and counsel and as you grow older and older, your channel of thought will more and more coincide with what I tell you at this time. I don't want any of you to wait as long as I did to acquire this deep and helpful testimony of life and living. It can be of great use to you early in life and, when acquired, it will give you treasured peace of mind and comfort.

Keep Trying

I'm not an official prophet but I firmly believe that great trials await all of you. These will be of varied nature. Prepare for them and meet them. Use deep thought and appropriate action in trying to overcome them. You will not, in many cases, seem to succeed, but remember the effort to comply will not be overlooked by Deity. All such well meant trying will be compensated for at a time when it will be very conducive to your advancement and well being in the next existence.

Follow Worthy Examples

I implore all of you to remember that those of us who have, or soon will have gone before, expect

every one of you to live lives of deep religious credibility. Only those who do so will receive the reward of Celestial Glory. I would hate to have to realize that our family tree had some missing branches, even small ones.

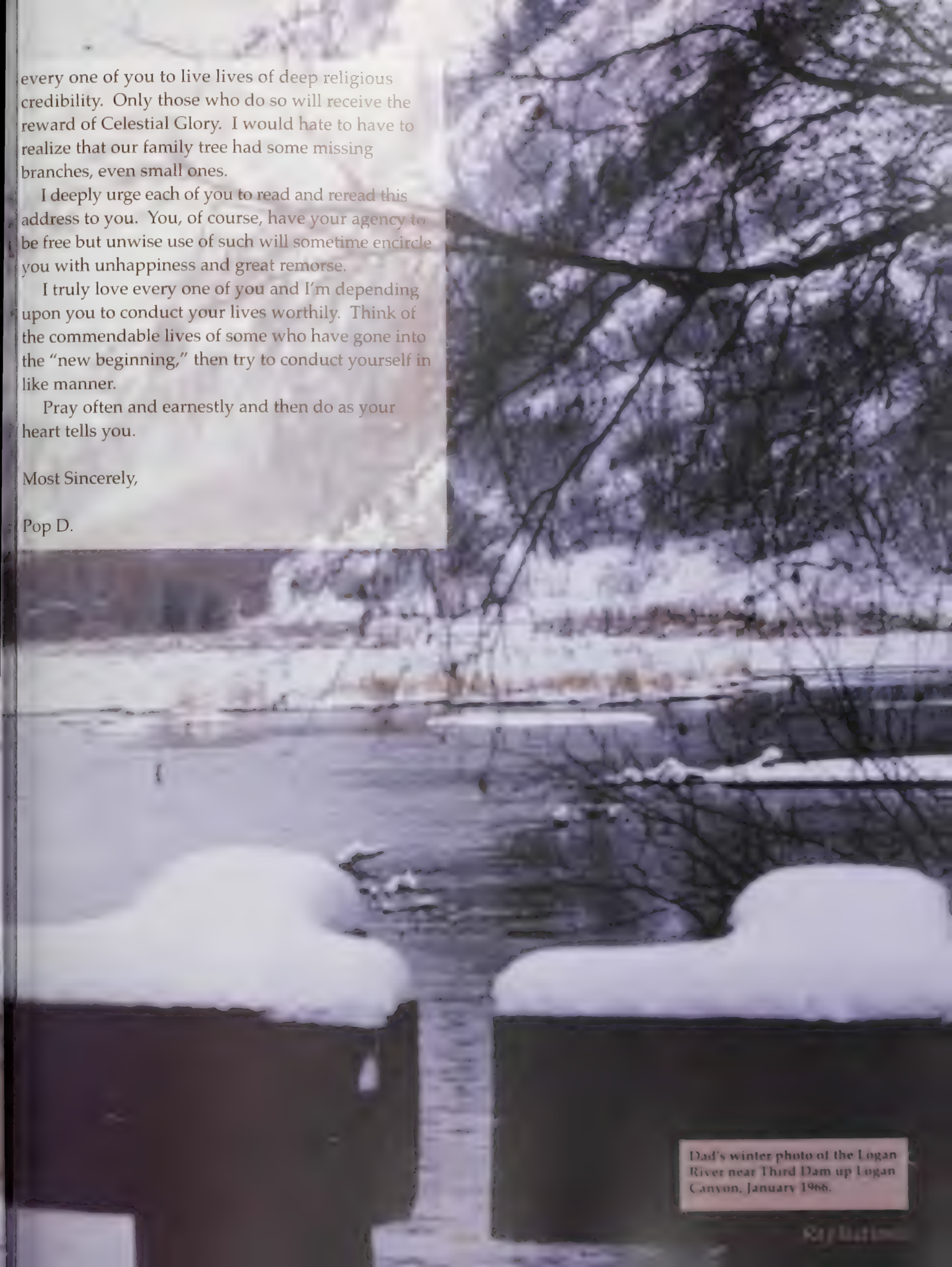
I deeply urge each of you to read and reread this address to you. You, of course, have your agency to be free but unwise use of such will sometime encircle you with unhappiness and great remorse.

I truly love every one of you and I'm depending upon you to conduct your lives worthily. Think of the commendable lives of some who have gone into the "new beginning," then try to conduct yourself in like manner.

Pray often and earnestly and then do as your heart tells you.

Most Sincerely,

Pop D.



Dad's winter photo of the Logan River near Third Dam up Logan Canyon, January 1966.

From the Mountain Top

(Letter to family members dated 31 May 1989)

Because of recent physical developments in my existence, I feel I must compose a somewhat final directive to all the family.

I've had a very satisfying life and during that time I feel I have climbed that proverbial mountain of life. And now from its lofty summit I can very easily and positively visualize the real purpose of one's mortal existence here on earth.

I don't mean to be repetitious in what I record here and I sincerely urge each of you to read, reread, and pray about what I will briefly write about at this time. However, I do say here again that each of you was planned for and wanted. Your Mom and I have loved and nurtured each of you. She, of course, is no longer with us in mortality but I'm very sure that she is aware of my responsibility as I yet barely exist here with you.



Photo: Dad somewhere in the Cache National Forest up Logan Canyon, January 1966.

So what I record here is expressive of her desires, also. This will probably be my last written directive to you so I speak with pure knowledge attained through a lifetime of varied experiences with her.

I urge all of you to truly evaluate your lives and then make what changes seem necessary. Remember each of us was placed here to be tried and tested. Sometimes this is harsh but undaunted trying to do that which is right will eventually be rewarded.

I don't need to itemize each rule of life because you are pretty much aware of such. But adherence to these basic needs is imperative constantly.

Repentance is valuable if such is true and lasting. Be very mindful of the spiritual needs in your lives. I positively know that such is effective and can balance your lives to meet Deity's requirements.

Do not worship the "things of the world." Do not treasure money and wealth. Simply remember that you take only that which you have earned in a spiritual manner.

As I gaze into the future I realize the great blessings, which can be showered upon those who live properly and constantly try to live gospel laws.

If each of you will try, try, try, then I can promise you glory beyond your finite ability to understand at this time.

Remember Mom and I love every one of you and yours. The time will come when you will each face the responsibility of being a senior patriarch or matriarch at the head of your own family.

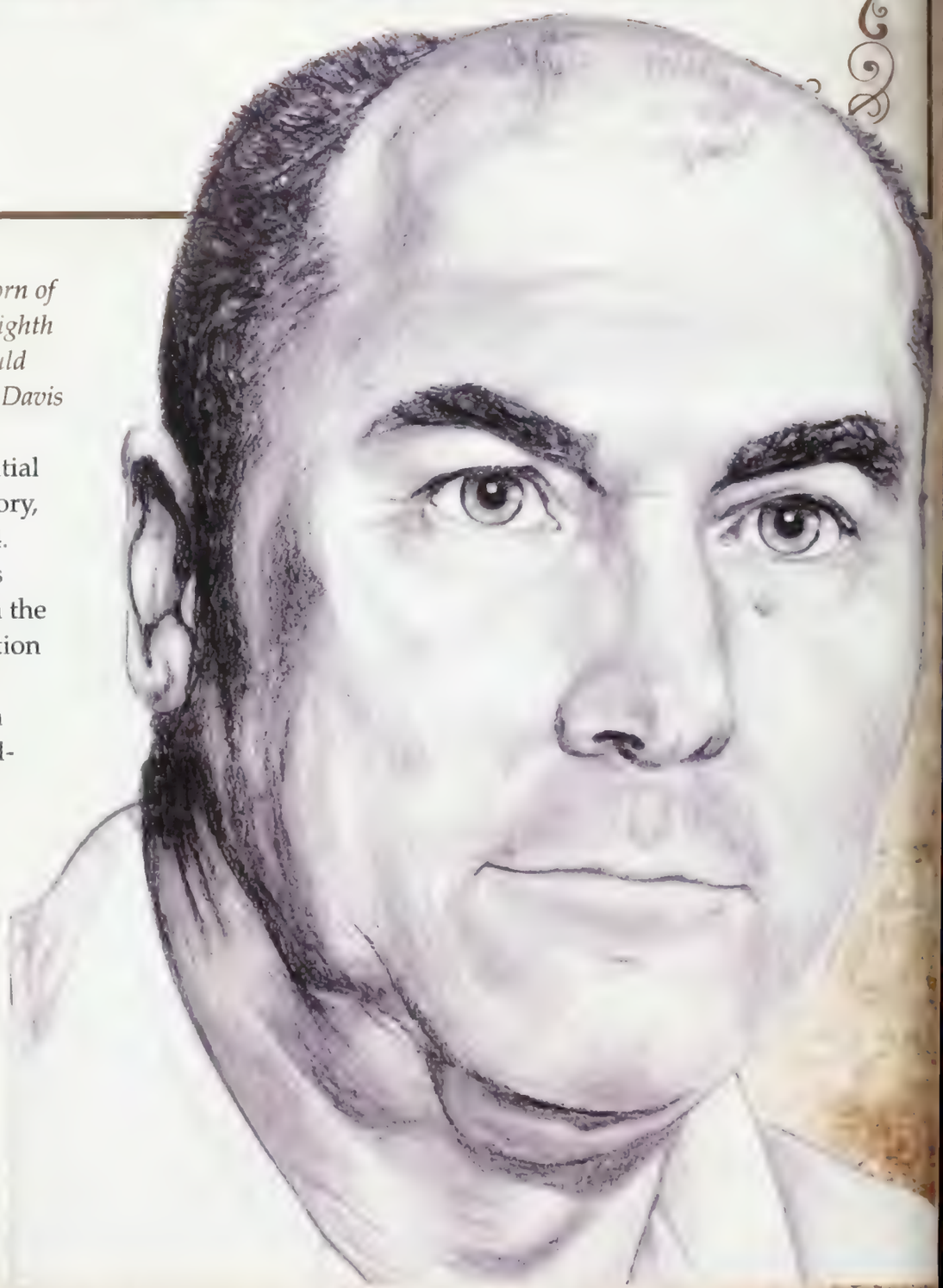
God bless you and remember to try, try, try.

Deepest love,

(Mom) & Pop



The Life History of Versal LaVel Davis



Like Nephi of old, I feel I was born of choice parents. I became the eighth child and fifth son of John Gould Davis and Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis on Oct. 18, 1915.

Thus began Versal L. Davis' initial "rough draft" of his personal history, which he wrote in December 1964. What follows in this chapter is his more extensive 1977 version, with the addition of an eight-page completion written ten years later in 1987.

Even though it may seem redundant to include Dad's hand-written history in this already lengthy volume, I felt it was important to include his brief autobiography — important for him to speak for himself. As you read the following pages you'll discover a plethora of details not include in the forepart of this book.

The drawing of Dad at the right was done by Deb in 1978 as a Mother's Day gift for Mom.

Versal LaVel Davis — Life History

Little did I realize, as I sat on that log near the area of the winter wood pile, that the inferno, I was so entranced with, was the total destruction of my birthplace. The flames reached higher and higher with each gust of wind and I was totally oblivious to the torment that the rest of the family was experiencing. This scene of distruction took place during the darkness of night. I belive my father, mother, & others had been in St. Anthony during the earlier hours. I do not remember any details of what actually happened or why except the spectacle of the huge holocaust that was very quickly destroying our home. I must have been very young because I remember nothing prior to the fire and for 2 or 3 years after I remember very little.

This home was a very modest structure situated on a parcel of land overlooking the Snake River. It rested about 2½ miles north-east of St. Anthony.

It was many years later that I realized what a blow this was to my parents. They had struggled many years to obtain this residence and then lost it and the contents which were in it. However

dad acquired some land about ½ mile north of this former homesight. Here after securing financing through mortgages and much hard labor he constructed another home which still remains to this day (1977)

This new residence was a comfortable one and compared to many others at that time was quite nice. It was here that I resided all my boyhood years after the fire which destroyed the place of my birth. In fact I lived here for 10 years after my marriage.

When I first began to remember quite well there were several still remaining in our family at home. My sisters (then) were all married and away but all three of my brothers were still at home. I was seven years younger than Wayne who was my next eldest brother. In order of their births they were - Merlie, George who died as an infant, Vera, Leatha, Warren, Floyd, Wayne and then me.

I recall that Leatha had marital difficulties with her husband and separated from him. She came to live with us for 2 or 3 years. At this time she was burdened with the raising of four daughters also. This created a tremendous task for dad & Mom but in my young heart I could only realize that

four girls were invading the sanctity of my privileged condition.

Also, at about this same time, Mattie was also having problems in resolving marriages to three husbands. This combination of family strife was hard on dad & Mom and I look back now and wonder how they managed.

As a young boy I was given the responsibility of several menial tasks. Herding the cows was necessary, packing in the day's supply of firewood, feeding the chickens, gathering the eggs, being derrick boy during haying season, tromping hay on the hay stack, and many other similar jobs that a farm boy is just right for.

When I was in the latter part of my sixth year I was sent to school. This proved to be a traumatic experience for a few days. I remember joining several of the neighborhood kids in riding on the school wagon. This was actually an ordinary wagon drawn by a team of horses. It had a canvas cover which protected us from the weather. I was sent to school alone and therefore I was frightened terribly. But after the kind help of a very understanding teacher I finally settled down and became quite happy. I'll never forget Mrs. Hust who was my first grade teacher. I will be grateful to

for for providing me with help when I needed it most. I've never disliked my formal training and I'm sure her understanding and concern has been of tremendous help.

During my earlier years at school I was advanced automatically for six months or what we called a half year. This took place once in my 2nd year and also in my 3rd year.

I'll never forget how I was dressed at this time. I wore knee length knickerbocker pants and had long black stockings inside of high button shoes. Also I very definitely remember that I wore long handled underwear which my mother actually sewed on me. This was done after each time I had to bathe in an old fashioned round laundry tub.

The summer periods were wonderful in many ways - with 'swimmin', 'bikin', 'ridin', 'campin', etc. Speaking of swimming - I can't remember all the times I used to do this but I do recall one special occasion when I disobeyed an order. It was quite normal to have one's hair shorn close to one's head. This eliminated the need to comb it and incidentally one could go swimmin' with out the tell-tale appearance of wet dripping locks. I, of course, took quick and often unfair advantage of this and got by quite

well until the frequency started to tell on me. You see mom noticed that I was becoming more lazy than usual and that my eyes were more red than normal. She, of course, realized what was going on and thereby instructed me one day to ~~not~~ go swimming. Well, I agreed, but who should join me this day but my nephew, Dutch. His real name is and was Warren but he became known as just 'Dutch' to me. We of course, flipped rocks in our home made flippers, robbed a few bird's nests, trapped a ground squirrel or two, drowned some out by pouring water down their holes and another kid thing or two. During all this time we were getting closer and closer to the 'ole swimmin hole. When there we decided that mom wouldn't know about it if we kept ~~quite~~ quiet. So off came our shirts and bib overalls. We wore nothing else. Into the water we plunged. Boy, what fun we were having. We simply forgot to keep our voices down and were really having quite a time. It wasn't until I heard a 'Well Son' from the direction of the bank that I realized we had company. I came to attention the best I could in the turbulent current and looked up at mom. She simply said

'You remember what I told you don't you'? I replied - 'Yes - I guess so' She instructed me to get out and follow her. Remember, I was stark naked and terribly embarrassed. Nevertheless I meekly followed. During the mean-time Dutch had exited on the opposite bank, gone upstream, crossed over and retrieved his clothes. I never saw him again for several days.

Mom directed me to an open grassy spot in the calf pasture where she showed me a stick that was to be used to punish me.

I then received one of the worst and most humiliating thrashings that I ever got in my life. With no clothes on, I was open to new welts every time she struck me. I howled like a sick dog but it didn't do any good. After she felt I'd had enough I was instructed to dress and follow her to the house. There I was introduced to Dad who I'm sure laughed inwardly about the whole thing.

In spite of the direction and pain of it I have never been bitter about it. I knew I had disobeyed and I also knew that the punishment was just.

That was the only time that Mom really inflicted physical punishment but

I surely recall several times that dad took matters in hand. He had a unique way of making me suffer before he actually whipped me. It usually went something like this: "Well son, I guess you know what I've got to do don't you?" I'd reluctantly reply that 'I guess I did.' He would then remove his sharp-bladed pocket knife from his overall pocket, open to the long cutting blade, thumb it to test its sharpness and then present it to me. He didn't have to tell me what I was supposed to do. After the first lesson I knew very well that I was to go to the near by ditch bank, select a 'whiller' and cut it at proper length. Then return to dad who would be waiting in the kitchen. He would inspect the torture tool and then hand it back to me. I, of course, knew what was taking place - I was suffering real mental agony - a part of his devious plan. He'd say "I'm afraid this one is not quite large enough - better get another." Thereupon I'd slowly procure one a little longer - but not much. He would meticulously inspect this one and then indicate he'd prefer one with just a little more spring in it. Once more I would make the long, tortuous trip to the 'willer patch'. I'd select one that

would meet his specifications yet one which, I felt, would be the least painful to me. Upon my hesitant return he would very methodically look it over, make a flourishing swish or two and then declare it would do very well. I was then laced around the legs several times while 'ouching' and 'owing' to the top of my voice. He would then relent and I was then free to go and lick my wounds. I smile when I think of those numerous occasions and I realize that it was somewhat painful but I can never remember of any real welts ever raising on my afflicted legs. I'm sure he knew just how much and how long to administer justice.

Life on the ranch, in my childhood years, was enjoyable in many respects - I'll mention briefly what took place at various times. Wayne had purchased an old delapidated model T ford. He had run it some and then pushed it inside an old ice house. My nephew, Dutch, and I decided we were going to make it run. We cranked & cranked, pulled its 'ears' down, primed the carb., tapped the coil boxes & did everything we knew of to make it go - but to no avail. So we would jack up one rear wheel and then take turns in pretending we were on an actual trip. While one cranked the engine the other

would pretend to steer through countless miles of up and down - in and out traffic. The one cranking would always have to terminate the trip being taken by the one leisurely sitting behind the steering wheel.

Another day we (Dutch + I) took an old bicycle with wood rims minus tires and pushed it about ½ mile north along the county road. At this point there was a small hill which we would ascend and then ride this rickety old 2 wheeler to the base of the incline. It was rough going and actually hard work but to us it was real fun.

My first boat was simply a square pine box about 6 feet square and 1 foot deep. It was used to mix seed wheat and smut preventative. I would calk all the cracks as best I could and then drag it to the near-by canal and launch it. Did have to rest directly in the center or it would immediately capsize. One could float perhaps 50 yards before it would fill with water and then sink. But so what - I knew how to swim and to drag the sinking boat ashore was all part of the fun.

Along this same canal were some large black willow trees. It was great fun to climb to the near end of one of the larger branches and let one's weight bend it to the ground where one could then place

pressure with both feet and spring up into the air in a giant arc that would climax and then body weight would bend the springy limb back to the ground. Then with whoops and appropriate yells one could ascend again to the previous climax point. Sometimes this was done over water to make the stunt more thrilling. Of course a wet hide was sometimes the result.

I'll never cease to wonder how I ever managed to crawl though an opening made only large enough for a sitting hen to sit through. You see, Dutch and I used to pretend that we were inmates in the low pens that were used for chickens to hatch eggs. It was composed of a small covered enclosure from which a small opening led to a screen covered area where the chicken was fed and watered. Going back and forth through this opening was commonplace then, when we were just little shavers.

Every spring it was customary to round up all the younger stock and drive them into a pole corral. We would then rope each one and pull them to a special spot outside the enclosure. Here we would throw them down and render the necessary operations to make them profitable. This included emasculating to produce a good beef steer, dehorning to prevent fighting,

vaccinating to prevent blackleg disease, and finally branding with a hot iron to establish a mark of ownership. This always was a somewhat gruesome, bloody task but again I remember it to be quite an annual occasion. It was on occasions like this that I was quite a hero in being like the cowboys in the old silent movies I used to attend.

Along this same line - Each summer was an ideal time to have a private rodeo. Many of the closer neighbors would get together and construct a rodeo corral. This was erected near the border to the extensive open range north and west of our ranches. From this central area many of us 'cowboys' would spread out for several miles and round up the range cattle and horses we encountered. We drove them to the corral and then spent the rest of the day riding them. We certainly didn't observe the rodeo rules of the game but we had fun - even with bruises.

Dutch & I played 'cowboys & indians' quite often. It always seemed that the Indians always got the raw side of every fight. The cowboys were just too good with their handmade guns made of old lathe strips. Also the stick horses the cowboys rode were much too fast for the Indian

ponies that tried to overtake the two cowboys. These ponies, (Cowboy or Indian) came in several sizes and shapes - whatever the nearest willow patch would produce.

One of the most memorable experiences I had was going with Dutch on 'cook outs'. We usually went by boat, paddling up river above the Big V dam. We thought nothing about the danger involved when we used to maneuver close to the spillway area. I think of this now and I realize how thoughtless we were then. But usually, after investigating the river banks we would finally proceed upstream to an island where we would cook our meal. It usually consisted of fried potatoes & onions, a nice fat chickin, some bottled fruit, a punch drink, and if we were lucky perhaps a candy bar. We would eat then play pirate on this secluded island. Of course it was always necessary to try the fishing a bit also. A check was always made to rob any magpie nests also. We always hoped that these would produce half grown young which we could place on appropriate branches where we could easily shoot them with our home-made slingshots or flippers as we called them.

In later years this cooking experience

expanded to overnight camping also. This we enjoyed a great deal. We sometimes stayed away as long as a week. On these longer excursions we travelled to the mountains which were north of our home. We always took a team of horses that could be used to ride as well. These trips usually involved travelling about 40 miles going and the same, of course, in returning. It was not unusual to encounter various forms of wildlife such as deer, elk, bear, mountain lion, and coyotes. But we were brave and showed no fear.

In the wintertime we would trap muskrats, weasels, skunks, and rabbits. It was great fun to use our $1.98 skiis and go crosscountry in rabbit habitat and see how many rabbits we could shoot and bring home to supplement the feed for the chickens. We used to ride the strawstacks also by laboriously climbing to the snow covered summit and then riding our trusty skiis to the base. This was really great fun and so much cheaper than the commercialized situation that exists today.

I'm sure that I should relate a few of the conditions that existed in relation to my formal training in the public schools. All of my education took place

in the St. Anthony system. On the north side of the river two schools were in use. The grade school from beginner to 8th grade and then High School. These however were both housed in the same building called the Central School. The south side of the river and - you see the Snake River divides the city - was represented by a brick building called the Lincoln School. It handled 1st to 5th grades.

One year, we who rode the school bus or 'wagon' were required to go to the south side because of crowded conditions in the Central School. I was in the 4th grade at the time. I first met Thelma in this same class room. But, frankly, I wasn't charmed by her or any other gal who lived on this side of town. We were fit to be associated with and were simply ignored except when a fight would erupt and differences would have to be settled. I smile when I recall these vain animosities especially when I became warm and friendly with them in later years.

The following year I returned to the Central school and in my 6th year I was again Thelma's classmate and remained so until I quit High School in my junior year. Little did I realize that she would eventually become the mother of

my 5 sons and 3 daughters. In fact, I never dated her until the night of the senior graduation. At this time she was chumming with my niece, Bernice Olson, and through her I was conned into a date with 'Mom'. Our dates were quite intermittent for several months and then the roof fell in and I succumbed.

I can truthfully say that I enjoyed my school years and I recall many happy and rewarding experiences. I dropped out of school because I was needed on the ranch. All my brothers and sisters were gone and Dad was in need of more steady and available help. I've often regretted, however, that I never finished high school. But, at that time, high school was not required by law and many young people simply went to farming or whatever was available at the time.

I inject this thought in my memoirs.— I can truthfully say that, though I did not become a personal friend of Thelma's during our school associations, I respected her and admired her for her pleasant behavior and her keen intellect. I look back and remember how she was always at the head of every class we were together in. She was also a superb girl athlete. She won the high school award all four years as a

student and classmate. This cup is still in the trophy collection of the St. A. High School as of 1977. This has, no doubt, set a record that, I'm sure, has not been excelled in the 40 years since it became hers.

It was necessary to obtain firewood for heating and cooking. This was done, for the most part, by going to the mountains and cutting down the dry trees that were found there. These were cut into suitable lengths of about 16 feet and then laboriously placed upon the bolsters or running gears of a horse drawn wagon. This took about 2 to 3 days to complete one trip which provided about 2 cords of wood. About 15 cords were required to furnish enough for a year. So several trips were necessary to provide the needed supply. Dad and I usually made these excursions and recall with real pride the first time he let me drive the team and manipulate the brakes on the wagon. We had to travel over a mountain pass and it was quite a thrill to handle the team and load of logs all by myself. In later years, I also joined with my brother, Floyd, in obtaining saw logs to process into lumber in his mill. We, however, used trucks & trailers and logging equipment that we made ourselves. It was not

unusual at all to do the morning chores around the ranch, go to the mountains and load 2 trucks with trailers, return home, then do the evining chores. This would involve 15 to 18 hrs. of extra hard work. But I simply do not recall this as being extremely tiring. I was in perfect physical condition and hardly knew my own strength and endurance.

All this was done plus the myriad other duties associated with farming and ranching. The spring, summer, and fall were busy seasons but winter was much more relaxed with a slower, less pressured atmosphere.

I used to spend several days each spring cleaning the irrigation system. This involved the main canal and the arteries that supplied the farms. This work, together with mending the fences around 3 different ranches, was time consuming and sometimes frustrating. The three ranches were 120 acres where the home was, 160 acres north and east of the home place (about 2 miles distant) and 240 acres of rented property belonging to a mortgage co. This was adjacent across the county road from the home place. Incidentally my father was watermaster of the main canal for 20 yrs - up to the time of his sudden passing. I was then elected

to the same position which I held until I left the farming operation in 1978.

I will relate briefly a few interest aspects of my courtship and marriage. Also of the experiences of Thelma's and my earlier married life, while on the ranch. After Thelma's graduation from high school she enrolled the following fall in Ricks College. She attended this school for 2 years and graduated with honors. She applied for a teaching position and finally contracted with a district in Teton Basin. This small country school was located in a place called Chapin.

During these years, she and I had more or less gone together steadily. We became engaged on Dec 29, 1936 - a Leap Year by the way - I held out until that date -. We planned on marriage at the time school terminated in the spring of 1937. However we changed our plans and became man and wife on Feb 12, 1937 - Lincolns Birthday. This was a civil marriage which took place without fanfare in the court house in Idaho Falls, Idaho. We were married by a judge named Davis - no relation. Thelma's father was with us and was a witness. Thelma completed her contract by teaching until spring. She came home on week-ends when the winter weather permitted.

At this time, on July 2, 1977, I am resting and meditating in the cool basement bedroom of our home in Logan. I have converted part of this room into a research and records department. Here I have written my history to this point and expect to finish it here also. At least to the present time.

To continue with events after our marriage in the spring of 1937 — I mean the follow up history that took place in the spring after our becoming man and wife in the previous February.

The ranch home was quite large and was easily divided so Mom and Dad could use one section and Thelma and I lived in the other. This worked quite well for a number of years. LaVel was our first born and was brought into the world on a cold wintry day in Feb. of 1938. I recall that, when the doctor was summoned, he drove through snow storms to reach us at this home. Thelma was apparently not quite ready to cooperate immediately and so the doctor planned on returning to St Anthony. But 'old man winter' had different ideas and soon proved that this doctor was not going anywhere. A blizzard blew huge snowdrifts across the roads and, incidentally, we had the doctor as our guest until late

the next day. Thelma finally became a mother after an all night vigil by Mom, my sister Vera, and myself. Incidentally expense wise this first child cost us $25.00. He was really a bargain!!

The years that followed were eventful in many ways. Dad and Mother were both becoming quite elderly and were not able to physically do a great deal on the ranch. This prompted me to use Thelma at times where she could most effectively assist me. The operation consisted of farming and cattle raising. With this we always maintained a large herd of milk cows. Raising hay was imperative and became our largest single effort. I well remember, that during the second world war years, I was forced to ask her to do all she could to aid in harvesting the large hay crops. Very little outside help was available because of the tremendous demands on people to support the war effort - both in the service and military production needs. Many many times she rode a horse drawn hay mower for hours on end. During this time she would usually be mindful of a baby either resting near in a bassinette or perhaps at the ranch home with my mother.

I'll never forget how much I needed this help and also I'll never cease to

love her most dearly for this willingness to serve. She also helped in stacking the hay in huge units near our barns and corrals on the home place. Quite often she was needed to operate the milking machines when I was elsewhere. Of course, other things were necessary also, like feeding the cattle, cleaning the barns, feeding the calves, tending the chickens, and many other relative chores associated with ranch life.

We did not have mechanized machinery at this time and so horsepower was mandatory. Proudly, I can say that I did keep some wonderful animals for this purpose. I am and was mechanically oriented but yet I appreciated and loved beautiful horses! I always kept a very good riding horse and I recall with joy how dependable these animals were. Relative to this I also took great pride in keeping at least one dependable cattle dog. Such was very useful and our first three boys recall how 'Brownie' used to be their constant companion.

After the termination of the war I also did a great deal of timber work. My brother Floyd had a sawmill at Baker Idaho. We worked together in providing saw logs for processing in this venture. It involved tremendous physical effort but I hardly

remember this as being difficult. It was a joy to work when health was supreme. I must have been strong as an ox and as untiring as a steam locomotive. You see this effort was expended together with all the other myriad needs of operating the ranch.

In retrospect I would like to mention something about the conditions surrounding my being on the ranch during the war. Normally, I was at the age when young men were needed as servicemen. I can say with all truth and pride that I did not seek deferment and that I feel I served well in remaining on the ranch and producing the food etc. that was sorely needed. About every six months my classification was updated and at the time the war closed I was next to go into active service. Had the war lasted another year or so I wonder how Thelma and my mother could have managed on the ranch. Dad had passed away in 1942. I just want all to know that I felt just as patriotic in the role I played as I would have had I been in the service. I have always been proud of my sons in respect to their service records and have encouraged them to always consider their obligation to their country.

I should mention a few other things that were of great importance during my

years on the ranch. Thelma and I became quite active in church work. She was a member of the Yellowstone Stake Primary board. I became a Scoutmaster and sunday school teacher. I look back and realize that the greatest effort expended was in the field of scouting. I loved the outdoors and this condition led to years of service and affiliation with scouts and scouters. At this time 1977 I hold a 35 year record of registration. During the time I served in St. Anthony as district member I met and associated with some of the most honest men I have ever known. Their tempering effect upon my life will always be most appreciated.

Thelma and I became quite interested in the dance programs of the church and because of our learning in this respect we enjoyed mingling with other couples in attending public dances. This activity carried through many years until I became somewhat afflicted with artritis. After this I was forced to limit our activity a great deal.

Another facet of my public life has been involved in singing. Appalently the Lord blessed me with a good singing voice and at an early age I began to render vocal numbers. I did a great deal of solo work but I was even more involved in quartet renditions. In this respect

I was a member of a quartet composed of my brother, Floyd, Myrtlen Bassett of St Anthony, and Lister Layton also of St Anthony. Incidentally we sang together for about twenty years. This terminated when I moved to Logan.

My many years of hunting and fishing started during our early years on the ranch. Of course as a boy I had involved myself somewhat but after 2 or 3 years of married life I associated with several real hunters and fishermen. I'll never forget the first time I went deer hunting with my neighbors, the Carters. Also, I'll always remember how this grew to be an annual event with Wayne my brother, and other members of the family or with close friends. Elk hunting was a must as was going in quest of antelope. Fishing became habitual and finally required the constructing of a boat and the time payment purchase of an outboard motor. Bird hunting, especially sage hens, was a constant challenge. Incidentally Thelma and our boys went along with me on many of these ventures.

During the later years of my married life on the ranch I became interested in repair work on automobiles. I had known and had grown up with a friend by the name of Jim Johnson. He had trained as a body repairman. This sort of work interested me and eventually I worked out

an apprenticeship during two winters at the local Chevrolet dealership. During this time I also managed caring for the needs of the ranch. However, as time went by, I realized more and more that ranching was not fulfilling my vocational desires. So, when an opportunity arose for permanent employment in a new auto-body shop was offered, I accepted. This decision involved selling a small interest in the ranch. I used what proceeds I received as my share of the family estate and purchased or rather made a down payment on a comfortable home in St. Anthony. So my severance from ranch life to urban living took place and therefrom I have been a 'city dweller'. The years on the ranch were pleasant and memorable but this change in my lifestyle was needed and proved to be for my best benefit. Though I don't really feel I have benefited more financially yet I have grown and matured more perceptibly in the labor field around other individuals. At least I have been gainfully employed since that time in 1948. I have never at any time been unemployed or drawn compensation relating to such.

But going back to my 5 years residence in St Anthony. - I worked at two garages

as an employee and was service manager of the Idaho Auto Body Shop for two years.

When we took up residence in St. Anthony we became members of the 3rd ward. While there we carried on the church and civic duties as delegated. I continued my activity in scouting and dancing. I was also involved in the leadership of the Mutual of the ward. On a civic level I took part in several election campaigns as a judge. One of my most memorable experiences was that of being a volunteer fireman on the local department. Many varied experiences evolved from this activity. While a resident of St. A. and the 3rd ward I also became the father of 2 choice daughters. The three older boys had been born while I lived on the ranch.

Eventually, Thelma and I decided that our growing family needed the solidity and conducive environment of a stronger church community. So these desires finally crystallized in our searching for such a place. We investigated opportunities as far south as Provo Utah. Finding a job was no problem anywhere but living quarters were somewhat different. However, after several months of indecision we chose Logan, Utah as our new place of residence. I accepted a foremanship position in the De Soto - Plymouth dealership.

We had previously sold our home in St. A. I invested the proceeds on the modest frame home at 371 N 2nd S in lovely Cache Valley. I truly have enjoyed this location and firmly believe that it became such as answer to prayers in our behalf. Life and living at this address has been wonderful. Surely problems have arisen but all in all I'm not sorry that Thelma and I made this major move. Again however, money has not been a major factor in our content here. But I have had excellent health and my family's basic needs have always been provided. Certainly church and civic growth have been opportunities in our favor.

After arriving and settling in Logan I soon became active in church and scouting circles. In fact I was appointed as scout master of the local troop before I had ever been to church. This led through a cycle of activity from scoutmaster, to post advisor, to committeeman, to M I A superintendency, and finally I was appointed Logan district scout chairman. I served in this position until the local council president moved to Provo at which time I requested release. This was granted, and since, I have been registered as troop committee member only. I directed my church efforts toward more religious pursuits and have been in various positions in the ward and stake. I have

enjoyed teaching religeous doctrine however and it has taught me in return. Ive learned a great deal about doctrine and also Ive acquired a much greater and needed confidence among my associates. I launched into a field that has involved a tremendous amount of study and application. This was genealogical research. I hope my mother is pleased by this effort. She certainly was a great researcher herself. I have been a supervisor for almost 15 years in the Cache Branch Library. However my leadership in this was very recently interrupted by my appointment as 1st Counselor in the 1st Ward bishopric. This is truly an honor and at the same time a very humbling development. But my responsibility to the library is now as a regular missionary.

During my years in Logan I have also been very involved in other things. Singing of course is apparent, some play acting and directing, dancing was enjoyable. I also supported 2 sons, Brent and Brian, in the mission field. I am at this time (1977) supporting Debra also.

Hobbies have taken their share of my time also. Our hunting was an annual affair for many years. Fishing has always been a relaxing sport. However I must admit that hunting has almost faded entirely from my realm of desire. I have

grown to detest killing of wildlife of any kind. I really can't understand this change but it is true and I feel very good about it. I still have several guns and lots of ammunition but unless a serious real need for their use arises I perhaps will never actively use them again.

But as one phase passes another takes its place. Photography has very effectively filled this void and the myriad pictorial records I have prove this. In fact, I enjoy 'shooting' with a camera much more than I ever did with a gun. This activity has proven invaluable in my genealogical research also.

I have purposely neglected to comment much on the activities or otherwise of the immediate family. This record is very effectively furnished in the family history files that Thelma has very meticulously been compiling. These are very extensive and represent a tremendous effort. I sincerely hope and pray that they are guarded and preserved indefinitely.

Accounts of our travels are incorporated in the histories. These have been most enjoyable and varied in scope. Thelma has almost always been an enthusiastic partner in my travel exploits and I love and appreciate her ~~for~~ for this. In fact, she has supported me in all my worthwhile activities whether church, civic, or otherwise.

I would be very ungrateful if I did not express my testimony about several things. First I want all to know that no man could have asked and recieved more support and devotion than I have from my sweetheart and wife. Surely the Lord was kind to me when I recivid her as my wife. She has been a constant source of strength for me in all of my many, many needs. I could never itemize, even genually, the ways she has stood by my side. I'm sure the Lord is going to be very considerate of her when the books are finally balanced. All who follow after her will have to be extremely diligent and prayerful to excede what she has done. Her accomplishments could and should be a wonderful set of goals to aim at.
As time has passed I have slowly but very surely realized that religeous testimony is a strength that is invaluable. It, of course, must be obtained by experience and effort. Certainly my attitudes of life and living are much deeper and more profound now than they were earlier in life. Mainly, I've come to realize that life is indeed a serious probation which involves constant learning and service. All activities and goals which we make must have ever lingering effect which will ensure us exaltation in a new existence. As I grow older, I know this is true and I sincerely urge all who read this to bend every effort toward this end. Certainly we

are provided with every tool we need to do this. To ignore our celestial opportunities is sure to become tragic. We are especially blessed to be members of a true church and thereby are given additional help through our confirmation. It is truly sad that many ignore this and adhere to only the ways of the world.

I bear my witness that because of my recognition and effort I have acquired a testimony of the church and what it stands for. I believe, when I leave this existence, I will most surely realize that God does exist, that Jesus Christ is truly our Redeemer, also Joseph Smith is and was a prophet, that we are led by a prophet today, and that the church is definitely true. Some think I am somewhat strange when I say, that, I rather anticipate going to the next existence where I can meet Dad and Mom and my brothers and sisters who have preceded me in passing. I know, however, that I must more fully prepare myself here so I can be more effective there in continuing this pursuit of exaltation. It is a grand reward and is worthy of every effort we can expend while here in mortality.

No doubt I have forgotten many facets of my history that should be included. But as further time goes by I will attempt to record events of importance.

On 18 Nov. 1987, Dad wrote the following in his journal (Vol. IV, p. 72.):

I'm planning to complete my life history to the present time. I have not entered anything since 1977. I'll therefore have about 10 years of history to record. It will be difficult to do this because of my inability to write properly. But, I will try to make it as legible as I can.

You can see by comparing this page with previous ones, written ten years earlier, that Dad's handwriting deteriorated. As he grew older his hands shook when he tried to write. He didn't know then (but we know now) that he had "Essential Tremors (ET)," an annoying but harmless neurological condition, which is often hereditary. Brian has also been diagnosed with ET.

It has been a little over 10 years since I wrote concerning my personal history. At this time, I will attempt to make this account legible. The past decade has brought good and bad into my life. One of the bad is my inability to control my unsteady hands. Of course, my writing is, therefore, unevenly affected.

I'll try to write my experiences in chronological order but there will be some overlapping. I have kept my journals up to date and many of the items I will write about in this history are detailed much more in my personal journals. Also, a tremendous amount of information is found in Mom's extensive records that Twila have at this time. Numerous photographs and such are there also.

After my semi-retirement in 1978, Thelma & I were able to do some extensive travelling to various places. Of course, Canada & Alaska were included as we toured much of British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and Alaska. She and I drove to Bella Coola which proved to be very rewarding as we travelled through the pristine majesty of the coast range and then descended over precipitous roads leading to the inland bays of the Pacific Ocean.

We also went to Texas several times, as we felt need, to visit Ja Vel & Colleen and also Deb & Trey.

I once travelled, by pickup, to Florida where Ja Vel procurred a new wing for his wrecked airplane.

Mom & I also travelled to Alabama & Georgia where

we visited Brian + Jackie and Tom + John.

Various trips were made to the Pacific Northwest as we visited Brent + Inge and Brian + Jackie.

Colorado, Southern Utah, and Wyoming became repeat spots of interest as we visited Twila + Richard in Lakewood, Colorado.

Mom was very precious as we, together, planned and travelled. We did not spend lavishly but we truly enjoyed the varied experiences of travel.

After our return from Alaska, in 1974, we, as a family, were shocked to find that Aleda, Brian, and Laura were each afflicted in like manner with tumors of the carotid arteries and adrenal glands. This necessitated many serious operations in the U. of Utah Hospital. Thousands of dollars was spent to cover the tremendous expense involved. However, all were taken care of and I feel we were blessed.

After Aleda's surgery, she was called upon a mission to California. This was worrisome but she responded wonderfully.

And speaking of missions, I was pleased to support Duane as he also was called on a mission to Massachusetts and Maine. To add to this Mom + I were also called and we labored in Arizona. This was the Maricopa Branch on the Gila Indian Reservation. Duane, Mom, and I were all out at the same time. This was in 1980 and '81. It was expensive but we managed. I still wonder in amazement how we did this.

After my official retirement I, yet, did some limited work for Ace Mill. However, this has tapered off until, at this time, I do nothing to supplement my Social Security.

My health was very good until the fall of 1981 when Mom & I were on our Gila River Indian mission. I was seriously afflicted and she and I were forced to come home about 3 months before our appointed time. After being home ~~here~~ for about a month, I was required to undergo radiation treatments to control prostate cancer. This terminated after about 2 months and 40 appointments at St Benedicts Hospital in Ogden.

I began to feel better and Mom & I decided to ask for another mission appointment. However, I suffered a sudden and severe heart attack which left me seriously unable to do much. I also suffered because of arthritic problems of my back. Diabetes also set in. Up to this point in 1987 I have been hospitalized nine separate times.

But my illnesses were not as terrible as Mom experienced. In the spring of 1983 she began to show signs of ovarian cancer. She was required to submit to several operations. After chemo-therapy she became much worse until she left us while in the Logan Hospital. This sobering event took place on March 27, 1985.

This was a traumatic event that became a ~~load~~ burden hard to bear. But love and understanding from all the family made the load much easier to bear.

She was interred in a choice spot in the beautiful Logan Cemetery near her alma-mater the Utah State University. Her resting spot is very sacred to me and I visit it very often. I shall probably join her body in the not too distant future.

I missed her very much after she passed away and even now almost 3 year later I still have very deep emotion. However, I am grateful she is released from the physical pain which she had to bear. Also I'm sure she is receiving just rewards for having lived a very commendable life here in mortality.

I sold the home place to Elwan and Melanie. This had been pre-determined prior to Mom's leaving us.

I managed to maintain myself with Elwan and Mel for about 5 months after which I married Bessie Alvord. This became a reality after much sincere prayer and thought. Bessie is a member of the Logan 2nd 2/nd choir. I had known her the entire time I had lived in Logan. At this time she and I live in her home at 235 east center street.

I'd like to record here that before Mom passed away she advised me to marry again. I thought little of this at the time but as time went by I realized I needed companionship. So Bessie and I were united in marriage on Aug 20, her birthday. This took place in the Logan Temple and was for time only. I truly record here that her children and mine all approved heartily of our union. We have been very

compatible since and Dee got a strong feeling that Mom approves. We do nothing intentionally that she would resent.

We have attending the temple almost every week and often Bessie accompanies me. Both of us take part in regular ward church activities. I should mention here also that Mom & I did officiate as temple workers for some. Bessie has also helped me do this.

Mom's & my family have scattered a great deal as some live in Texas, Colorado, Washington, California, and Utah. We keep in touch with each other. We expect to join together in a family reunion soon. It will be the 2nd since Mom left us.

At this point I wish to write briefly about Mom and my testimony regarding her. I've recorded in various places how much I loved and respected her. This feeling is still very much in my heart. It gives me great peace of mind to know that if I conduct myself properly I will be with her again for all Eternity. I think of her a great deal and I realize how fortunate I was to spend our mortal lives together. My religious convictions are firmly imbedded in my mind and I know the promises made to us can be fulfilled. I intend to make this come true.

I've written my testimony of such matters on pages 30 and 31 in this history. Nothing has changed since I compiled such many years ago.

She kept my private journals and, also, she collected many photographs and other artifacts that augment my history. These are found in the collection that Viola has in her home in Lakewood. Many, many flashbacks are written which are, also, stored in Lakewood.

During the last 15 or 20 years I have been fishing many times in Idaho. I utilized my aluminium boat, the same one that Mom & I together with Deb & Duane used when we floated the Yukon River in 1974. Mom used to go with me a great deal. Reub Johnson has also shared many hours with me. Success has been very gratifying. At this time in '87 it is becoming more and more difficult for me to launch & then reload the boat. I don't know how much longer I will be able to continue this satisfying sport as I fish for trout in various reservoirs.

Last February of this year '87, Bessie and I went, with others, to Mexico. We flew by plane then travel by bus as we visited many areas including Mexico City and Acapulco. This was an enlightening experience as we learned about the customs and culture of Mexico. The old ruins were very interesting as we learned much about the people who lived there before America was discovered. However my desire is yet to revisit the north countries of Canada & Alaska. Maybe I shall be able to go again for a last time. Time will tell.

I have neglected to record that Thelma's mother, after having lived with us over six years, passed away in 1980. This left Mom & me free to accept a mission call which came later that same year. Thelma will surely be blessed for her dedicated service to her mother who was a constant care during the entire time she lived in our home.

Just today, I received word that my sister Vera died. This will leave me as the only living survivor of the children of my dad & mother, I'm sure it will not be very much longer before we are all together in the next existence. I am expected to sing at Vera's funeral which will be held next Saturday in St. Anthony.

To finalize this history at this point in time Nov. 18, '87, I wish all to know that Bessie is a very kind and considerate woman. She has experienced great trauma in her life and I'm sure she will be greatly rewarded for all her righteous efforts. I do appreciate her very, very much.

She and I have done some travelling which we have enjoyed a great deal. It somewhat seems like old times when Mom and I went on many such trips. I now use a 1986 Dodge Caravan which I've accepted as part payment from Dunans, on the lease plan. It is comforting to use.

My finances at this time are becoming more and more of a problem as I've had

to assist several of the family. Lo Vel has been without employment for many months. He and family are, at this time, in Logan. I do have some funds in certificates at a local bank that I've got to save such for future medical and funeral expenses.

My health has deteriorated a great deal in the last 6 months. My ticker is very weak and diabetes has become much worse. However, I don't mean to complain - I will soon be with Mom anyway. I do state that Bessie is very considerate and helpful - no matter could be much worse.

I repeat here that Logan has been a very choice place to be in and Mom and I have never regretted coming here almost 36 years ago. She and I sincerely hope and pray that our many descendants will acquire the happiness level that we did. It has been and is very rewarding.

I'll never be able to write the final chapter of my life history but, if I'm able, I may add to this at a later date in my declining years.

Anyway I may ~~soon~~ soon be with someone very dear to me as we progress together in that mythical land of 'over there'.


1977
1978
1979
VERSAL
LAVEL
DAVIS
1984
VERSAL
LAVEL
DAVIS
1985
VERSAL
LAVEL
DAVIS

Supplemental Information

VLD
CS

The Family Records

Before Mom's death in 1985, she and Dad carefully prepared for their upcoming transitions. Mom wrote as much as she could of her personal history and together she and Dad made important decisions. One was to sell the family home to Duane and Mel — Dad planned to occupy a few rooms downstairs. Another was to parcel out most of their earthy possessions, for Dad would need little with his new living arrangement.

Accordingly, Dad gathered all of us together following Mom's funeral and, using a list he and Mom had made together previously, he gave each of us substantial items accumulated during their 48 years together. The dissolution of their home and distribution of their earthly possessions was sobering, orderly, and accomplished with the full cooperation of everyone present.

My inheritance was Mom and Dad's collection of family records: albums, journals, photographs, slides, negatives, mission journals & notebooks, home movies, ancestoral life histories, a book of all our patriarchial blessings, and all of their genealogical research. These are the resources I used to write this book.

I want each family member who reads this to kow this rich cache of information is available tor your own personal and family research. Our lives and those of our ancestors are documented in detail in these records. Please contact me if you would like to have access to them.

Ancestral Pedigree

for

Versal LaVel Davis



Issue: January 1984

HUSBAND Versal La Vel DAVIS

Born 18 October 1915 Place St. Anthony, Fremont, Idaho
Chr 5 December 1915 Place St. Anthony Ward, Yellowstone Stake, Idaho
Mar 12 February 1937 Place Idaho Falls, Bonneville, Idaho
Died Place
Bur Place

HUSBAND'S FATHER John Gould DAVIS
HUSBAND'S MOTHER Charlotte Alice McDANIEL
HUSBAND'S OTHER WIVES

WIFE Thelma HALL

Born 27 September 1916 Place Gridley, Butte, California
Chr 5 November 1916 Place Gridley Branch, California Mission
Died Place
Bur Place

WIFE'S FATHER Jick HALL
WIFE'S MOTHER Ruby BIRCH
WIFE'S OTHER HUSBANDS

Husband Versal La Vel DAVIS 1915
Wife Thelma HALL
Ward Examiners 1 2
Stake or Mission

NAME & ADDRESS OF PERSON SUBMITTING SHEET
Thelma Hall Davis
371 W 2nd So
Logan, Ut. 84321

RELATION OF ABOVE TO HUSBAND: wife
RELATION OF ABOVE TO WIFE:

FOUR GENERATION SHEETS FOR FILING ONLY
YES ☒ NO ☐

DATE SUBMITTED TO GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

LDS ORDINANCE DATA

	BAPTIZED (Date)	ENDOWED (Date)	SEALED (Date and Temple) WIFE TO HUSBAND
HUSBAND	31 May 1924 SL	17 Nov 1937 SL	17 Nov 1937 SL
WIFE	1 Nov 1924 SL	17 Nov 1937 SL	SEALED (Date and Temple) CHILDREN TO PARENTS

SEX	CHILDREN (Given Names)	SURNAME	WHEN BORN (DAY MONTH YEAR)	WHERE BORN (TOWN)	COUNTY	STATE OR COUNTRY	DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE (TO WHOM)	WHEN DIED (DAY MONTH YEAR)	BAPTIZED (Date)	ENDOWED (Date)	SEALED (Date and Temple) CHILDREN TO PARENTS
1 M	Clinton La Vel	DAVIS	1 Feb 1938	St. Anthony	Fremont	Ida.	12 Sept. 1956 Colleen OLSEN		24 Feb 1946	12 Sept 1956 Lg	BIC
2 M	Versal Brent	DAVIS	21 Dec. 1939	St. Anthony	Fremont	Ida	25 October 1963 Inge SCHEFFEL		21 Mar 1948	21 Oct 1960 Lg	BIC
3 M	Brian "J"	DAVIS	6 May 1943	St. Anthony	Fremont	Ida	15 April 1965 Jacqueline MILLWARD		28 Oct 1951	20 June 1962 Lg	BIC
4 F	Twila	DAVIS	2 March 1948	St. Anthony	Fremont	Ida.	3 July 1967 Richard "E" BIRD		3 Mar. 1956	3 July 1967 Lg	BIC
5 F	Tamara	DAVIS	17 Feb. 1950	St. Anthony	Fremont	Ida	1 July 1968 John Lorin CLARK		1 Mar 1958	1 July 1968 Lg	BIC
6 M	Lauris Hall	DAVIS	9 Feb. 1953	Logan	Cache	Utah	27 Dec 1971 Dorothy Tacy MINKLER		4 Mar 1961	27 Dec 1971 Lg	BIC
7 F	Debra	DAVIS	30 May 1956	Logan	Cache	Utah	15 July 1982 Herman Clements NELSON III (Trey)		6 June 1964	28 April 1977 Lg	BIC
8 M	Duane McDaniel	DAVIS	21 Jan 1961	Logan	Cache	Utah	1 July 1982 Melanie ANDERSON		1 Feb 1969	11 Jan 1980 Lg	BIC
9											
10											
11											

2011 Update to 1984 Family Group Sheet

Versal LaVel Davis
married Bonnie Glenner Alford 20 Aug 1983
died 13 Oct 1995

Thelma Hall
died 27 March 2008

1. Clinton LaVel Davis
died 23 Aug 2018

3. **Brian J Davis**
div Jacqueline Millward, Aug 1999
(Jackie died 10 Mar 2009)
married Keiko Ishikawa 18 March 2000

4. **Twila Davis**
husband Richard E Bird died 18 April 2002

6. **Lauris Hall Davis**
div Dorothy Minkler Nov 2005
married Teresa Hunter Priest 25 Feb 2006

7. **Debra Davis**
div Herman Clements Nelson III (Trey), 1993
died 16 Aug 2001

Versal & Thelma Children Grandchildren

Four Generations
2011



Versal LaVel DAVIS
b. 18 Oct. 1915
d. 13 Oct. 1989
m. 12 Feb. 1937
Thelma HALL
b. 27 Sept. 1916
d. 27 Mar. 1985



LaVel
b. 2/1/38
d. 8/23/00



Brent
b. 12/21/39
d.



Brian
b. 5/6/43
d.



Twila
b. 3/2/48
d.



Tami
b. 2/17/50
d.



Lauris
b. 2/9/53
d.



Deb
b. 5/30/56
d. 8/16/01



Duane
b. 1/21/61
d.



LaVel & Colleen's family 1978
(plus son-in-law Gary Spence)

Clinton LaVel DAVIS
m. *Colleen Olsen*
Corette (1958)
Lynnette (1959)
Laureen (1963)
Shauna (1965)
Lyle (1971)
Christine (1977)

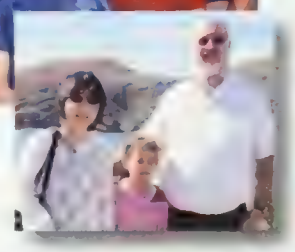


Brent & Inge's family 1987

Versal Brent DAVIS
m. *Inge Scheffel*
Estelle (1968)
Allan (1970)



Brian & Jackie's family
1990



Brian & Keiko's
family 2010

Brian J DAVIS
m. *Jacqueline (Jackie) Millward (div)*
Kim (1967)
Deone (1968)
Jetawn (1971)
Jennifer (1973)
Jeff (1976)
Michelle (1981)
m. *Keiko Ishikawa*
Catherine (2002)



Richard & Twila's family 1994

Twila DAVIS
m. *Richard E Bird*
Trisha (1969)
Raquelle (1970)
Tiffany (1973)
Travis (1976)
Heather (1978)

Grandchildren



John & Tami's family 1975

Tamara DAVIS
m. *John Lorin Clark*
Lorin (1969, d. 1969)
Tami Dee (1970)
Shalyce (1972)
Jared (1974)



Lauris & Dorothy's family 1988



Rese Davis
2011

Lauris Hall DAVIS
m. *Dorothy Tacy Minkler (div)*
Marci (1974)
Jim (1975)
Jon (1981)
Tacy Faye (1984, d. 1984)
m. *Teresa (Rese) Hunter Priest*

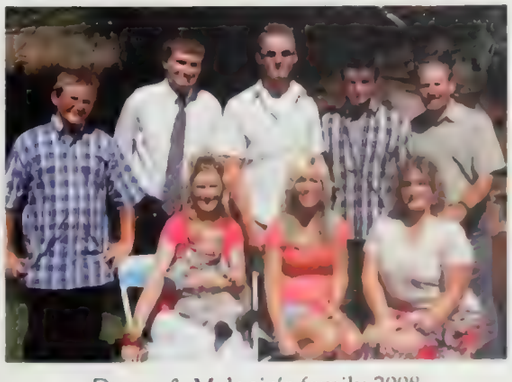


Deb's family 1993



Trey Nelson
1983

Debra DAVIS
m. *Herman Clements (Trey) Nelson III (div)*
Rachel (1983)
Anna (1986)
Vanessa (1991)



Duane & Melanie's family 2008
including son-in-law Kent Thurston (wearing tie) daughter-in-law Jamie Puhlmann Davis (blond hair) and grandson Brodie Thurston

Duane McDaniel DAVIS
m. *Melanie Anderson*
Ashley (1983)
Austin (1986)
Branden (1991)
Braxton (1993)

Great Grandchildren

LaVel's Family

Corette Davis Spence:
Trevor Spence (1979)
Derek Spence (1982)
Devan Spence (1985)
Katie Spence (1990)
Kierra Spence (1995)

Lynnette Davis Ballard:
Casey Ballard (1979)
Dustin Ballard (1982)
Corey Ballard (1988)

Laureen Davis Hansen:
Christopher Hansen (1982)
Justin Hansen (1984)
Mia Hansen (1986)
Brandon Hansen (1988)

Shauna Davis Peterson:
Quinn Peterson (1988)
Joelle Peterson (1990)
Taren Peterson (1992)
Riley Peterson (1993)

Lyle Davis:
Garrett Davis (1997)
Kennan Davis (2000)
Savanna Davis (2004)
Whitley Davis (2010)

Christine Davis Evans:
Ashlyn Erickson (1999)
McKenna Erickson (2003)
Ammon Evans (1999)
Alyssa Evans (2001)
Peyton Evans (2010)

Brent's Family

Estelle Davis Ritchie:
Connor Ritchie (2003)
Noah Ritchie (2005)
Shelby Ritchie (2008)

Allan Davis:
Marinda Davis (1998)
Katrina Davis (1998)
Allison Davis (2003)

Brian's Family

Kim Davis Roller:
Camille O'Brien (1987)
Cory O'Brien (1991)
Tanner Roller (1996)
Travis Nielsen (1987)
Chaselyn Nielsen (2001)

Deone Davis Docken:
Sierra Docken (1995)
Hans Docken (1998)

Jetawn Davis:

Jennifer Davis Saulala:
Huafa Saulala(1995)
Cumorah Saulala (1996)
Ilisapeti Saulala (1998)
Lataisia Saulala (2000)
Mosiah Saulala (2003)
Anastasia Saulala (2006)

Jeff Davis:
Andrew Clark (2002)
Aiden Davis (2010)

Michelle Davis Sheldon:
Kara Sheldon (2008)
Leah Sheldon (2010)

Twila's Family

Trisha Bird Leimer:
Stefan Leimer (1990)
Jessica Leimer (1992)
Christian Leimer (1995)
Axel Leimer (1998)
Natasha Leimer (2000)

Raquelle Bird Johnson:
Trevor Johnson (1994)
Chelsea Johnson (1997)
Davis Johnson (2000)
Tamasin Johnson (2005)

Tiffany Bird Axtell:
Russell (Tripp) Axtell (1995)
Mikayla Axtell (1997)
Emily Axtell (1999)
Sydney Axtell (2003)
Levi Axtell (2008)

Travis Bird:
Talmage Bird (2001)
Whitaker Bird (2002)
Tanner Bird (2004)
Sadie Bird (2006)

Heather Bird Jackson:

Tami's Family

Tami Dee Clark Hanson:
Lorin Hanson (1990)
Autumn Hanson (1991)
Marianne Hanson (1993)
Joshua Hanson (1994)
Crystal Hanson (1998)

Shalyce Clark:

Jared Clark:

Lauris' Family

Marci Davis Key:
Blake Anderson (2001)

Jim Davis:
Kyler Davis (1999)
Phoenix Davis (2002)

Jon Davis:
Clayton Simmons (2001)
Eric (Cecily) Davis (2004)

Deb's Family

Rachel Nelson Ragland

Anna Nelson

Vanessa Nelson

Duane's Family

Ashley Davis Thurston
Brodie Thurston (2007)
Layla Thurston (2010)

Austin Davis

Braden Davis

Braxton Davis

The Family Tumors

(Reference pp. 243-244)

Our genetic disease is called Hereditary Paraganglioma (PGL). In our family we have multiple paragangliomas. Following is part of an article from the website of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI), which gives the best explanation of our tumors I've found. The Paraganglioma Program at UPCI was in the forefront in researching, diagnosing and treating PGL in the 1990s. Our family played a significant role in the research which led to their genetic testing, now available by mail.

What is Hereditary Paraganglioma?

Hereditary paraganglioma (PGL) is a rare genetic disease characterized by the development of mostly benign tumors in the head and neck region. . . . The tumors originate from the paraganglionic tissue that is clustered in close association with the major nerves and the arteries in the head and neck. Paraganglionic tissue is identified by the anatomic location and by a common microscopic architecture.

The largest area of paraganglionic tissue is called the carotid body because of its location in the neck at the bifurcation of the common carotid artery. The carotid artery normally senses blood oxygen levels and, when there is insufficient oxygen in the bloodstream, it signals the heart and lungs to increase the respiration and heart rates. The carodit body is also the most common site of origin for PGL. Carotid body tumors are usually benign and highly vascular due to the very high rate of blood flow through this organ. In approximately 10 percent of the cases, PGL tumors may undergo malignant transformation and metastizsize to distant organs, such as the lungs and bone. These tumors are most commonly observed after the third decade of life, although they can be diagnosed even n early teen years. In most instances, the presenting symptom of the carotid body tumor is a non-tender, firm, slow-growing mass in the neck. The mass is movable from side to side, but not up and down.

Tumors arising from other paraganglionic tissues, such as glomus vagale (arising from the vegas nerve), glomus jugulare and glomus tympanicum [these are all head tumors], can give rise to other symptoms and signs depending on their location. Tumors located in the middle ear may cause pain and ringing in the ear, and thos arising in the larynx (voice box) may cause hoarseness and difficulty in swallowing. Glomus jugulare tumors, which are at the base of the skull, can reult in serious clinical complications, such as deafness or facial palsy.

PGL tumors usually present as solitary tumors, but in about 10 percent of the cases, they present as multiple tumors. Multiple paragangliomas may be confined to the head and neck region or may be accompanied by adrenal (also called pheochromocytoma) or extra-adrenal paragangliomas in the abdomen. [Twila's note: They've also been found behind the heart or under the collarbone, as in several cases in our family.]

How Our Tumors are Passed On

Our family tumors are passed on through "genomic imprinting." It is a gender-of-the-parent-specific transmission and has been observed in many independent families across many generations in large PGL families (like ours). For the Davis Family paraganglioma tumors, who ends up actually getting them depends on genomic imprinting — depends on the gender of the transmitting parent. For example:

If a **FATHER** develops paraganglioma tumors, approximately half of his children will develop PGL, meaning about half of them will get tumors, too. Those children who develop tumors will pass on the PGL gene to about half of their own children. This inheritance pattern is called "Autosomal Dominant."

If a **MOTHER** is affected, it is unlikely tumors will develop in any of her children; however, about half of them will be carriers of the PGL gene, which will be passed on to about half of the next generation. In other words, children of a PGL affected mother will not GET tumors, but they can CARRY the tumor gene and PASS IT ON to their own children.

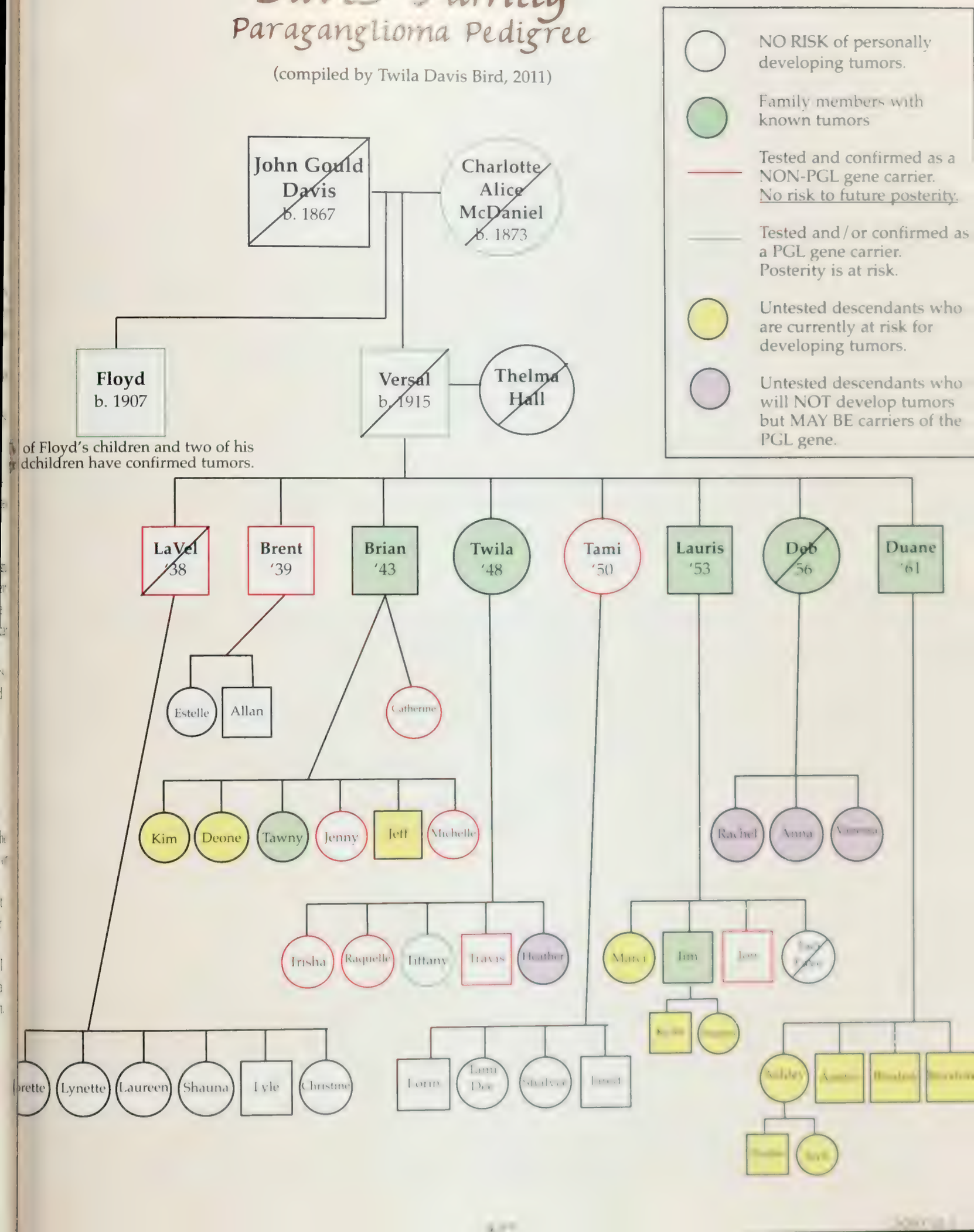
For each succeeding generation, genomic imprinting begins all over again. Who gets the tumors and who doesn't depends on whether the transmitting parent was a male or a female. Again, the bottom line is:

Tumors generally develop only in children who have FATHERS with tumors.

One other important point:
**If a child DOES NOT inherit the PGL gene from an affected parent,
NO progeny will develop tumors from that point on.**

Davis Family
Paraganglioma Pedigree

(compiled by Twila Davis Bird, 2011)



Davis Family Tumor History

(compiled by Twila Davis Bird, 2011)

CHILDREN OF VERSAL LAVEL DAVIS

Debra Davis Nelson (1956-2001)

14 Jan. 1975	resection of large glomus jugulare tumor in right middle ear and neck and right carotid body tumor. Paralysis in right face. 15-hour surgery. Univ. of Utah Medical Center. Dr. James Parkin.
Oct. 1975	reparative facial nerve surgery abandoned when Deb reacted violently to the test anesthetic. Became hypertensive and developed marked tachycardia which was caused by an undiagnosed pheochromocytoma. Surgery postponed. Univ. of Utah Medical Center. Dr. James Parkin.
19 Nov. 1975	facial nerve graft; build up of mastoid bone area; revision of right neck scar. 11-hour surgery. Univ. of Utah Medical Center. Dr. James Parkin.
6 Jan. 1976	golfball-size pheochromocytoma removed from left adrenal gland; gland not removed. Left para-ovarian cyst removed. 4-hour surgery. Univ. of Utah Medical Center. Dr. James Parkin.
17 Sept. 1982	resection of recurrant glomus jugulare tumor in right middle ear. 8-hour surgery, Dr. Gates. Bexar County Medical Center, San Antonio, TX.
18 Sept. 1989	resection of large left carotid body tumor. 4-hour surgery. Swedish Hospital, Denver, CO. Dr. Roy Carlson.
13-14 Nov. '89	3rd surgery for removal of glomus jugulare tumor in right side of head. Surgery 22 hours. Facial and cranial nerves damaged. St. Luke's Hospital, Denver, CO. Dr. Victor Schramm.
Nov-Dec, '98	daily radiation treatment for glomus vagali tumor (11/2" diameter) on left side of head. Univ. of Utah Medical Center.

Brian J Davis (1943-)

18 Oct. 1977	removal of right carotid body tumor and part of artery. Tumor embedded and entwined around interior branch of artery. Artery graft not possible. Artery removed. 6-hour surgery. 8 pints of blood. Dr. James Parkin. Univ. of Utah Medical Center.
17 July 1978	removal of adrenal pheochromocytoma. Adrenal gland removed. 9 pints of blood. Surgery through back. Rib removed. Univ. of Utah Medical Center. Dr. James Parkin.
22 Aug. 1978	removal of left carotid body tumor on exterior branch; 5-hour surgery. Univ. of Utah Medical Center. Dr. James Parkin.
March 1983	Medullary thyroid carcinoma. Removal of thyroid in premalignant stage. (C-cell hyperplasia). Univ of Washington Medical Center.
16 Dec. 1991	removal of golfball-size pheochromocytoma under left mid-collarbone. Nerves in left shoulder and arm traumatized. Univ. of Washington Medical Center.

Lauris Hall Davis (1953 -)

15 Dec. 1977	removal of large adrenal pheochromocytoma and right adrenal gland. 4-hour surgery. Dr. James Parkin. Univ. of Utah Medical Center.
17 Jan. 1978	removal of small right carotid body tumor; 4-hour surgery. Univ. of Utah Medical Center.
7 Feb. 1978	removal of left carotid body tumor. 6 pints of blood; 7-hour surgery. Incision repaired twice following surgery because Lauris coughted. Univ. of Utah Medical Center.
20 Apr. 1994	removal of 3-piece, bean-size glomus tympanicum tumor in right ear. Laser surgery through ear drum. Logan Medical Center, Logan, Utah. Dr. Gordon Wood. (Also injection of silicone gel into paralyzed right vocal cord.)

Twila Davis Bird (1948 -)

7 Aug. 1989	removal of duck-egg-size pheochromocytoma wedged between upper right heart and spine. 4-hour surgery. Also removal of fibrocystic lump from left breast. Dr. James Harwood. Porter Hosptial. Denver, CO.

18 Aug. 1989	removal of right carotid body tumor (garbanzo bean size). Dr. Roy Carlson. Swedish Hospital, Denver. CO.
13 Sept. 1989	removal of egg-size left carotid body tumor. Dr. Roy Carlson. Swedish Hospital, Denver.
20 Oct. 1989	removal of glomus vagali tumor on left side of head . Size of large black olive. Facial nerve severed then spliced; other cranial nerves traumatized (tongue, swallowing, left shoulder, vocal cord); 10-hour surgery. Dr. Gary VanderArk (neurosurgeon) and Dr. Thomas Balkany (ear surgeon). Swedish Hospital, Denver, CO.
6 March 1992	removal of enlarged lymph gland in lower left neck. Non-cancerous. Dr. Richard Tillquist. Swedish Hospital, Denver, CO.
Dec. 1994	diagnosis of large nodules on thyroid. Biopsy and other tests negative for medullary thyroid carcinoma or C-cell hyperplasia. (endocrinologist: Dr. Steven Osa, Denver, CO.)
29 May 1998	Gamma Knife Radiation Surgery on 2 side-by-side glomus vagali tumors on the right side of the head. One marble-size; the other a little smaller. Dr. John McVicker (neurosurgeon); Joe Henderson (radiation physicist); Rocky Mountain Gamma Knife Center, St. Anthony Hospital, Denver, CO.
10 June 1998	surgery to remove pheochromocytoma in mid-right neck unsuccessful. Entire neck area explored but tumor not found. Right half of thyroid removed; nerve to right vocal cord severely damaged. Negative pathological results for tumor in resected thyroid section. Hashimoto's disease subsequently diagnosed. synthroid prescribed. (Subsequent 24-hour urine test and octreotide scan indicated tumor was still present. Further surgery postponed until symptoms warrant it.)

Duane McDaniel Davis (1961 -)

19 Sept. 2000	right carotid body tumor removed. Logan Regional Hospital, Logan, UT. Dr. Gordon Wood.
6 Feb. 2001	left carotid body tumor removed. Logan Regional Hospital, Logan, UT. Dr. Gordon Wood.

GRANDCHILDREN OF VERSAL LAVEL DAVIS

Tawny Davis (1971 -) (daughter of tumor-bearing father, Brian Davis)

25 June 1990	removal of two pheochromocytomas (each baseball-size) — one near right adrenal gland, one near the organ of Zucherandl. Univ. of Michigan Medical Center. Ann Arbor, MI.
17 Jan. 1995	removal of right carotid body tumor. Enlarged thyroid; biopsy; negative pathological report. Travis Air Force Base.
Summer 1995	removal of left carotid body tumor. Travis Air Force Base.
2 Apr. 2003	removal of tennis-ball size pheochromocytoma behind top part of heart. Dr. Michael Collins. LDS Hospital, Salt Lake City, UT.
8 Sept. 2004	Vocal cord repair.
21 Aug. 2006	removal of pheochromocytoma on right adrenal gland. Removal of adrenal gland. LDS Hospital, Salt Lake City, UT.
April 2011	bi-lateral carotid body tumors diagnosed. Surgery postponed until symptoms warrant it.

James Lauris Davis (1975 -) (son of tumor-bearing father, Lauris Davis)

15 May 2000	removal of left carotid body tumor. Dr. Haller, Univ. of Utah Medical Center.
11 Dec. 2001	removal of right carotid body tumor; doctor had difficulty distinguishing tumor from artery; inserted graft. Dr. Gordon Wood, Logan Specialty Hospital, Logan, Ut. (Jim suffered a stroke during recovery the second day following the surgery.)
4 Aug. 2004	removal of glomus tumor in right ear. Dr. Shelton, Univ. of Utah Medical Center, Salt Lake City, UT.
6 July 2005	removal of glomus tumor in left ear. Dr. Shelton, Univ. of Utah Medical Center, Salt Lake City, UT.
March 2011	suspected glomus tumor (possibly two) on the left side. Surgery postponed until symptoms warrant it.

Chapter Notes

One — Boyhood Memories

Sources frequently cited in this chapter have been identified by the following abbreviations:

Gould Davis, Versal LaVel. "Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son," a currently unpublished biographical account which includes 70 handwritten pages plus many photographs, documents, and sketches. The history is in possession of his daughter, Twila Davis Bird.

1 Davis, Versal LaVel. *Autobiography of Versal LaVel Davis*, 20 Dec. 1964, Logan, Utah. At the top of this 8-page, document recorded on 3-ring binder paper, Versal penned, *"Note - The following pages represent a rough draft which I did not refine."*

2. Ibid, p. 1. On p. 88 is a photograph of a note Dad wrote to Mom in the margin of her Rick's College yearbook during the time they were dating. It is signed "Dark."

3 Ibid, p. 1

4 Versal LaVel Davis birth certificate #35603 issued by the State of Idaho Bureau of Vital Statistics. The original certificate was in error for 61 years with his name listed as "West Davis." Versal filed documents in 1977 to correct his name. An amended certificate with the same number (#35603) was subsequently issued listing his name as "Versal LaVel Davis." Both certificates are in the possession of his daughter, Twila Davis Bird.



5 Versal LaVel Davis L.D.S. blessing certificate, Salt Lake Genealogical Library, Form E., St. Anthony Ward, Yellowstone Stake records, p. 836 & 837 (film #007601, pt. 1).

6 Davis, Versal LaVel. Deposition recorded on 15 Aug 1977 regarding the evolution of his name. The handwritten document is in the possession of his daughter, Twila Davis Bird.

7 Photo of Charlotte Alice Davis and her two sons, Floyd and Wayne. This photo came from Floyd Davis' *Book of Remembrance*, which in 2011 is in possession of his son, Dean Davis. On the back of the photo (a post card) is a note of unknown origin that is NOT in Floyd's handwriting. It says: *"Charlotte Alice (McDaniel) Davis, Floyd E. Davis on left of picture, Don Wayne Davis on right. Taken in Utah at Lincoln Carlyle Home. When grandfather McDaniel died, about 1912."*

George Washington McDaniel died in 1916 so the date as listed on the back is wrong. If the photo was taken in 1916, the true year of their grandfather McDaniel's death, Floyd (b. 1906) would have been 10 and Wayne (b. 1909) would have been 7. Judging by their appearance in the photograph, they seem a few years younger, perhaps 8 and 5, which would place the date closer to 1914.

8. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Autobiography of Versal LaVel Davis*, 20 Dec. 1964, Logan, Utah. At the top of this 8-page, document recorded on 3-ring binder paper, Versal penned, *"Note - The following pages represent a rough draft which I did not refine."*

9 Davis, Versal LaVel. *Versal LaVel Davis Life History*, a 39-page handwritten autobiography recorded on ruled, 3-ring binder paper. The first 31 pages were written in 1977, the last 8 pages on 18 Nov. 1987.

10 *Gould*, p. 38.

11 Ibid, p. 9.

12. Ibid, pp. 13-18.

13 Ibid, p. 38

14 Ibid, p. 39

15 Ibid, p. 34

16 Ibid, p. 24.

17. Ibid, p. 27.

18 Burt, Cyril O. *Ethel: A story of faith and courage*. This document is a biography of Cyril's mother, Ethel Burt. It includes the 1927 account of Ethel rescuing Cyril, when he was four-years-old, from a gorge of ice in the Snake River as recorded in Dad's *Flashback* titled "The Ice Gorge."

19. *Gould*, pp. 23-24.

20. Davis, Floyd Dean. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home in Phoenix. Arizona, 28 June 2010.

21. Merkley, Ann. "The Shoshone-Babbock and Old Fort Hall," booklet published by the Fort Hall Replica Commission, 1994.

22. Birch, Jesse Dean. [Thelma's cousin; both are grandchildren of David and Nancy Birch] "Jesse Dean's Photos and Commentary." A 7-page document describing dozens of photos relating to David and Nancy Birch in St. Anthony during the 30s and 40s.

23. *Gould*, p. 30.

24. Davis, Versal Brent. *Versal Brent Davis: From Beginning to (Not Quite) the End.* The first 37, single-spaced, typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not-yet-completed autobiography, "Years 0-17," drafted in 2011, pp. 16-17.

Mom (Thelma Hall Davis) also documented her memories of swimming in the "Channel." She said: *." . . our gang finally were brave enough to swim in the Snake River up by the St. Anthony Park. The water rushes between lava walls and the swimmer must know the channels and chutes. Every year the old Snake claimed a victim or 2. Lifeguards were unheard of. Once — just once — on a dare, I jumped off the big bridge into the Snake. The water doesn't appear to run swiftly there, it just swirls and twists a bit, and no one has found the bottom. I didn't either — I kept going down and down. I thot my lungs would burst. I kept thinking: "Relax, don't panic!" But I was fighting before I broke surface — and so weak!"* (*Jick and Ruby Hall Family History*, 1984. A 140-page, unpublished biography of Thelma's parents, with an emphasis on her own history. This quote is from a page marked "St. A. summers early 1930s")

25. Encyclopedia of American History. Answers Corp, 2006. "Mule," Answers.com 02 Jul. 2010. http://www.answers.com/topic/mule)

26. Johnson, Beverly Miller. *St. Anthony From the Beginning Through the 1940s*. Self-published, St. Anthony, Idaho, 2008, p. 39.

27. Idaho State Legislature website, "Responsibilities of a doorkeeper," 2010. (http://legislature.search.idaho.gov)

Two — Me N' Dutch

1. Wilcox, Fred. O. "Pea Seed Industry." Personal interview (Harold Forbush). Voices from the Past Oral History Project, Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society, 26 Oct. 1968. Taped and transcribed. Copy in possession of Twila Davis Bird.

2. Singleton, Merlie Ina Shosted Bowman [Versal's niece, the daughter of Leatha Davis Shosted. Personal interview (Colleen Davis and Bessie Alvord Davis) at St. Anthony's Keefer Park, 1 Aug. 1992, taped and transcribed.

3. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Merlie Damaris Davis," a 4-page, handwritten summary of his sister Merlie's life, 1981. The biographical sketch is included with similar mini-biographies of his other brothers and sisters at the back of the binder containing the 70-page history of his father titled *"Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son.*

Three — As a Teen & Young Adult

1 Davis, Versal LaVel. "Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son," a currently unpublished biographical account, which

includes 70 handwritten pages plus many photographs, documents, and sketches, p. 47.

2. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Versal LaVel Davis Life History*, a 39-page handwritten autobiography recorded on ruled, 3-ring binder paper. The first 31 pages were written in 1977, the last 8 pages on 18 Nov. 1987, p. 20.
3. Atkinson, Max and Bonnie. *History of the Yellowstone Stake-St. Anthony Idaho Stake: 1909 to 1986*. The St. Anthony Idaho Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, St. Anthony, Idaho, 1986.
4. Wright, Vard. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home two miles south of St. Anthony, Idaho, 11 July 2010.
5. "Livestock Brands: Reading and Understanding Livestock Brands." http://www.cowboyshowcase.com.
6. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son," a currently unpublished biographical account, which includes 70 handwritten pages plus many photographs, documents, and sketches, p. 48.
7. Davis, Versal LaVel. Handwritten labels for photographs in the VLD family album.
8. Loveland, Jay. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home on the Loveland Ranch north of St. Anthony, 10 July 2010, recorded and transcribed.
9. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Brief History of Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis, wife of John Gould Davis." This is an 8-page addendum to his more extensive, handwritten history of his father titled "*Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son,*" *p. 65.*
10. Davis, Versal LaVel. This quote was excerpted from Dad's brief "note of explanation," which he wrote at the end of Thelma's handwritten autobiographical *Jick and Ruby Hall Family History*, 1984. The document is a 140-page, unpublished biography of Thelma's parents, with an emphasis on her own history. It contains numerous maps, photographs, documents, and newspaper clippings.
11. Davis, Versal LaVel. Handwritten labels for photographs in the VLD family album.

Four — Early Ranch Life



1. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Brief History of Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis, wife of John Gould Davis," an 8-page addendum to his more extensive, hand-written history of his father titled "*Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son.*"
2. Loveland, Jay. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home on the Loveland Ranch north of St. Anthony, 10 July 2010, recorded and transcribed. Jay Loveland, a Davis grandson (Bert and Vera's son) claimed his grandmother Davis played favorites and he was one of them. He said once he and his brother Charles both had the measles and were bedridden. Grandma Davis came to visit and brought him a bag of marbles and didn't even acknowledge Charles, in the same bed. He said his cousin, Alice Shosted (Leatha's daughter), was also a favorite.

   Merlie Shosted Bowman, Alice's sister, concurred. In a taped and transcribed interview conducted during a V. L. Davis family reunion in St. Anthony on 1 Aug. 1992, she said: *There were four of us girls [Leatha's daughters] who lived with Grandma Davis when Versal was little. Grandma Davis had to bribe [my sister] Alice to live with her* [Twila: This would have been after Leatha had remarried and moved into her own home with her three other daughters — Nina, Vera & Merlie — leaving 11 year-old Alice with Gould and Alice on the ranch.] *Grandma always had to come down and get me to and stay with Alice when they* [Grandpa and Grandma Davis] *went to Logan. She didn't like me. She'd bring Alice back gifts and she'd bring me nothing. That was harsh reality. She was also given to Dorothy Loveland* [another grandchild, Vera's daughter].
3. "Muskrats," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muskrat.
4. Davis, Thelma Hall. "Ranch Income and Expenses in 1939." A small 4" x 6," blue, spiral notebook containing a detailed listing of items purchased and various income sources during the second year of Versal and Thelma's marriage, while they lived on the Davis ranch north of St Anthony, Idaho.

Five — The War Years

1. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Ok, I've looked everywhere for the source of this quotation and can't find it. In the early stages of writing this biography I wasn't as careful as I should have been in keeping track of my sources and now I'm paying for that mistake. This is a legitimate quote — Dad DID write this passage — but I just can't put my finger on where it is in his various writings. Sorry!"
2. "Celebrate Golden Wedding Anniversary: Christmas Day Marks Time for Celebration of Double Event," *Fremont County Chronicle-News*, St. Anthony, Idaho, January 1942.

   The newspaper article also reported: *At the appointed hour, on this day that will ever be to the members of their immediate [illegible] around the festive board, three long tables in all, beautiful with snow white linen and decorated in motif of the season. A three-tiered cake, holding 50 candles and topped with a miniature bride and groom formed the center piece of the main table, groaning with food in variety, quality, and quantity, indicative of this land of plenty, where all did justice.*
3. "Mr. and Mrs. Gould Davis Honored by Society," Fremont County Chronicle-News, January 1942. In part the article read: *"Honoring Mr. and Mrs. Gould Davis, who recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, members of the First L.D.S. ward genealogical society entertained at the home of W. M. Hansen Friday night.*

   The rooms were attractive with bouquets of red flowers. The mantel was decorated with two wedding cakes connected with a string of golden bells reading "1892 1942." Between the cakes was a tiny bride and groom. The couple were presented with a lovely gift from the group. . . . Mr. and Mrs. Gould Davis plan to leave in the near future for S. Canyon, Utah, where they will spend the winter.
4. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son," a currently unpublished biographical account, which includes 70 handwritten pages as well as many photographs, documents, and sketches, p. 62.
5. Davis, Charlotte Alice. Personal handwritten account on the back of three family group sheets in her "Book of Remembrance." The notes give a detailed description of the events leading up to her husband Gould's death in 1942.
6. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Ok, I've looked everywhere for the source of this quotation and can't find it. In the early stages of writing this biography I wasn't as careful as I should have been in keeping track of my sources and now I'm paying for that mistake. This is a legitimate quote — Dad DID write this passage — but I just can't put my finger on where it is in his various writings. Sorry!"
7. Davis, Versal Brent. *Versal Snow Davis, From the Beginning to Our Quest for Land.* First 37, single spaced, typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not yet completed autobiography. "Years 0-17," drafted in 2011.
8. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to John and Jean Clark, Savannah, GA, 16 Nov. 1976. In the letter, which also contains information about Brian's reinstatement into the Church following his disfellowshipment and his subsequent blessing of his own newborn son, Jeffrey, on 14 Nov. 1976, Mom wrote:

   Monday [Your Dad] was gone as usual, and I was busy with my sewing, [and] was just about to quit [illegible] he was coming in [illegible] Wednesday. I called to Brianne [illegible] and heard Dr. Donnell, a very special [illegible] Dad and I had to be there. [illegible] I was sure it was for Dad [illegible] Dr. Donnell wanted to [illegible] Dad was going to [illegible] Wednesday. [illegible] I didn't want to [illegible] Dad's [illegible] [illegible] Mom.]

   *[illegible] Dad [illegible] Dad [illegible] Dad [

13 Davis, Thelma Hall. "Versal LaVel Davis family history." This history is contained in thirteen white 3-inch 3-ring binders filled with chronological letters written to and received from family and friends, photographs, news clippings, personal documents, and greeting cards. The heart of the history, however, are Thelma's unique telephone notes, calendar notes, and personal journal entries

15 Davis, Thelma Hall. "I Can't Stay." A 1968 essay written for a Utah State University English class, when Thelma attended there in pursuit of her bachelor of arts degree. The story is based on a true event, Versal's rescue of a young woman from drowning at Island Park Reservoir in July 1946.

16. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Tragedy at Island Park Reservoir," Personal Journal II, 1981, p. 117.

17. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Autobiography of Versal LaVel Davis*, 20 Dec. 1964, Logan, Utah. At the top of this 8-page, document recorded on 3-ring binder paper, Versal penned, "Note - The following pages represent a rough draft which I did not refine."

18. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal journal, Vol. IV (10 Feb. 1986 - 31 Jan. 1989).

Six — St. Anthony Years

Sources frequently cited in this chapter have been identified by the following abbreviations:

Versal Davis, Versal LaVel. *Versal LaVel Davis Life History*, a 39-page handwritten autobiography recorded on ruled, 3-ring binder paper. The first 31 pages were written in 1977, the last 8 pages on 18 Nov. 1987.

Versal 2 Davis, Versal LaVel. *Autobiography of Versal LaVel Davis*, 20 Dec. 1964, Logan, Utah. At the top of this 8-page, document recorded on 3-ring binder paper, Versal penned, *"Note - The following pages represent a rough draft which I did not refine."*

Thelma Davis, Thelma Hall. *Autobiography of Thelma Hall Davis.* Written 1-19 March 1983; updated Feb. 1984.



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1. *Thelma*, p. 4.
2. *Versal*, p. 27.
3. *Thelma*, p. 4. Working two jobs — on the farm and in town at the autobody shop — were part of a long-range plan for Mom and Dad. They realized after Gould died the time was rapidly approaching when Dad would need to make a decision regarding his life's work. Thelma wrote (from this same source): *"After the death of Versal's father, we finally decided to sell the farm as Versal's real talents as a mechanic developed and his repair skills were more and more in demand."* Thus Dad began his apprenticeship as an automechanic.
4. Fremont County Probate Court affidavit, signed by Charlotte A. Davis on 29 April 1947 settling ranch ownership matters with Versal L. Davis. Signed and sworn before Probate Judge O. K. Meservy.
5. Fremont County, Idaho Warranty Deed #261847, dated 28 April 1947 transferring ownership of lots 11, 12, & 13 in block fifty-seven in St. Anthony, Idaho, from Carl P. Lenz and Eva Ellen Lenz to Versal L. Davis and Thelma H. Davis for the sum of $9,000.00.
6. "New Service Manager is Announced." *The Herald Journal*, May 1952. News article (with photo) reporting the hiring of Versal L. Davis as service manager at Transport Motor Company in Logan, Utah. (This was Versal's first job in Logan.)
7. *Versal*, p. 28.
8. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Brief History of Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis, Wife of John Gould Davis" an 8-page addendum to his more extensive, handwritten history of his father titled *"Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son."* There must have always been a little tension between Thelma and her mother-in-law, Alice Davis. Dad wrote: *When Thelma and I were going together we were quite close to Mother and Thelma. Of course, I also felt this. But so far as Dad was concerned he [illegible] with her and remained so all the rest of the time they [illegible]* And later in this same history of his mother, Dad added *him [illegible]*
9. Peterson, Vera Cleova Loveland. "Memories of Grandmother Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis." 1987. In 2005, her son, Verl Peterson, retyped the original document, which was found among Cleova's genealogy documents. The resulting typed copy is 1½ pages in length. Topics included her love of cooking and entertaining, her farm and household duties, play on her front lawn, her homemade socks, her enjoyment of people, her husband's death, and her resulting physical and mental decline
10. Loveland, Jay. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home on the Loveland Ranch north of St. Anthony, 10 July 2010, recorded and transcribed
11. Peterson, Vera Cleova Loveland. "Memories of Grandmother Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis." 1987. In 2005, her son, Verl Peterson, retyped the original document, which was found among Cleova's genealogy documents. The resulting typed copy is 1½ pages in length. Topics included her love of cooking and entertaining, her farm and household duties, play on her front lawn, her homemade socks, her enjoyment of people, her husband's death, and her resulting physical and mental decline.
12. Loveland, Jay. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home on the Loveland Ranch north of St. Anthony, 10 July 2010, recorded and transcribed. In a letter to Twila Bird, dated 28 March 2011, Jay added this wry note about Myrtle Fleming, Alice's caregiver: *"Mrs. Fleming was a very good cookie maker. My dad told me this [following incident]— Mrs. Fleming just finished changing the baby's dirty diaper then immediately put her hands back into the cookie dough, enhancing the flavor."*
13. Fremont County, Idaho Warranty Deed #261847, dated 28 April 1947 transferring ownership of lots 11, 12, & 13 in block fifty-seven in St. Anthony, Idaho, from Carl P. Lenz and Eva Ellen Lens to Versal L. Davis and Thelma H. Davis for the sum of $9,000.00.
14. *Versal*, p. 28.
15. Fremont County, Idaho Warranty Deed #261847, dated 28 April 1947 transferring ownership of lots 11, 12, & 13 in block fifty-seven in St. Anthony, Idaho, from Carl P. Lenz and Evva Ellen Lenz to Versal L. Davis and Thelma H. Davis for the sum of $9,000.00.
16. Davis, Versal LaVel. Versal's penned caption for this photo: *"Both of us (Harvey Jensen and myself) and a frontal shot in front of Economy Chevrolet Company in St. Anthony, Idaho."*

    The car repair shop was located on Bridge Street as is evidenced by the Roxy Theater, located directly across from them in the photo. The car shop is now gone (2010) but the theater remains.. (Twila's notation.)
17. *Versal*, p. 28-29. Also: "New Service Manager is Announced." *The Herald Journal*, May 1952. News article (with photo) reporting the hiring of Versal L. Davis as service manager at Transport Motor Company in Logan, Utah. (This was Versal's first job in Logan.)
18. Davis, Versal Brent. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 Sept. 2005, in which he recorded memories of his father, Versal L. Davis, as a volunteer fireman in the late 40s and early 50s.
19. *Versal*, p. 29.
20. Davis, Versal Brent. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 Sept. 2005, in which he recorded memories of his father, Versal L. Davis, as a volunteer fireman in the late 40s and early 50s.
21. Sutton, Ken. (St. Anthony fireman for 47 years.) Personal interview (Twila Bird) at the St. Anthony Fire Station, 3 Oct. 2005. Sutton described how the volunteer firefighter system worked in the late 40s and early 50s.
22. Ibid.
23. *Versal 2*, p. 8.
24. Davis, Versal LaVel. "Floyd Ervin Davis," a 3-page, handwritten summary of his brother, Floyd's, life, 1981. The biographical sketch is included with similar mini-biographies of his other brothers and sisters at the back of the binder containing the 70-page history of his father titled *Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son.*
25. Davis, Floyd Ervin. (Finished by his wife, Carrie Crapo Davis) "Floyd Ervin Davis Family History." 1962. Short, typed biography of Floyd E. Davis p. 20.
26. Ostermiller, Ada. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at Ada's St. Anthony home (507 West 1st North), 10 July 2010. Ada's home was used as the meeting house for the St. Anthony Third Ward during the years Versal and Thelma lived in town (1947-1952).
27. Davis, Versal Brent. *Versal Brent Davis From Beginning to (Not Quite) the End.* First 37, single-spaced, typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not-yet-completed autobiography, "Years 0-17," drafted in 2011, p. 15.
28. *Versal*, p. 28
29. *Versal 2*, p. 6.

30. *Thelma*, p. 4.
31. Davis, Versal Brent. *Versal Brent Davis: From Beginning to (Not Quite) the End.* First 37, single-spaced, typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not-yet-completed autobiography, "Years 0-17," drafted in 2011, p. 11.
32. Singleton, Blaine [Versal's childhood friend and husband of Merlie Ina Shosted, Versal's niece]. Personal interview (Twila Bird) during a V.L. Davis family reunion bus tour of sites in and around St. Anthony, Idaho, 1 Aug. 1992. Taped and transcribed.
33. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Autobiography of Versal LaVel Davis*, 20 Dec. 1964, Logan, Utah. At the top of this 8-page, document recorded on 3-ring binder paper, Versal penned, *"Note - The following pages represent a rough draft which I did not retype."*
34. Davis, Versal Brent. *Versal Brent Davis: From Beginning to (Not Quite) the End.* First 37, single-spaced, typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not-yet-completed autobiography, "Years 0-17," drafted in 2011, p. 6. Brent's version of "A Lunch Box Surprise":

One day I took my Dad's lunch bucket (a now old fashioned metal one with a thermos on top and with a snap down lid) to the gravel pile. Later, I returned home with the lunch bucket full of 40 baby snakes. After placing the bucket on the kitchen counter, I headed off to do something else. After a while, I returned to take care of my new pets but the lunch bucket was empty. At first I thought LaVel had hidden them or let them all go. Or maybe my mom had got rid of them. Everybody, however, seemed innocent -- then we began finding little snakes everywhere in the kitchen, and later throughout the house. They were behind doors, in closets, under the kitchen stove, under anything they could get under. When we examined the lunch bucket, we found a gap along one side of the lid just about the width of a baby snake body. Every one of those little critters had escaped. The good news is that it didn't seem to bother my mother very much. I guess she was becoming accustomed to my collecting and the things I brought home. Even more good news was the fact that we eventually found all but one of those little snakes, 39 of them. Number 40 was never found.

Seven — Early Logan Years



Sources frequently cited in this chapter have been identified by the following abbreviations:

Thelma Davis, Thelma Hall. *Autobiography of Thelma Hall Davis.* Written 1-19 March 1983; updated Feb. 1984. Thelma wrote this 10-page, handwritten document at the request of June Reading, Relief Society President in the Logan First Ward. In her journal (21 March 1983) Thelma recorded: *"Pres. June Reading asked me to write an autobiography of my life and submit that and my picture for a ward history. I finished that."* A copy of the history is in the Logan First Ward historical records. The original document is in the possession of her daughter, Twila Davis Bird.

Versal *Versal LaVel Davis Life History*, a 39-page handwritten autobiography recorded on ruled, 3-ring binder paper. The first 31 pages were written in 1977, the last 8 pages on 18 Nov. 1987.

Brent Davis, Versal Brent. *Versal Brent Davis: From Beginning to (Not Quite) the End.* First 37, single-spaced, typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not-yet-completed autobiography, "Years 0-17," drafted in 2011.

1. *Versal*, p. 30.
2. Davis, Lauris Hall. email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 Jan. 2011. Regarding the family vegetable garden: *I remember it seemed to go on forever and I HATED having to weed the darn thing. I usually got that assignment when I rarely went astray as a boy. But to this day I do not like gardening because of that fun chore that I seemed to constantly have.* The basement steps. *The stairs going down into the basement bring back many memories of running for my life from my older sisters. I could run and grab the pole and clear the stairs in one shot and they would not. That gave me time to make it to my room and slam the door before they could catch me. I liked it.* The upstairs bedroom. *Now for an interesting memory pertaining to the upstairs bedroom. This little boy had to go [illegible] and HATED going down the stairs and through mom and Lu's bedroom in the middle of the night to the bathroom. To remedy this, I found a convenient hole in the side of the wall that opened into the side attic where the floor was insulated with saw dust. I could secretly and conveniently relieve the incredible pressure in the middle of the night and not even get out of bed. What a blessing being a boy. And as far as the smell went?...well. I just blamed it on the stupid cats that my sisters always had running around.* Water Day: *I fondly remember running through the water in the backyard when it was our day to irrigate. We would splash and cool off all day long. Always have lots of mown grass all over our bodies that we would have to rinse of with the cold hose. I also remember our rubber raft swimming pools that were from the rafting expeditions that dad would go on with the scouts. There was one particular large black raft that we would blow up and then fill with water in the backyard and then jump off the garage into it. It was loads of fun for all the kids in the neighborhood.*
3. *Thelma*, p. 5.
4. Davis, Thelma. Calendar and day planner (March-June 1952). A few of the interesting notes in Mom's 1952 day planner include: Mon. 10 Mar., [illegible] Wed. 18 Mar., [illegible] Fri. 4 April, [illegible] *Mothers [in Ogden] - job & house hunting;"* Wed. 9 April, [illegible] *to finish arrangements for foremanship & pay* [illegible] Tues. 29 April, [illegible] Thurs. 1 May, [illegible] Sunday, 11 May (Mother's Day), *"Picnicked on river by old [illegible] Boys - chocolates. Brian - mend [illegible]* Fri. 23 May, *"School out* [illegible]
5. Davis, Versal. Letter to Thelma in St. Anthony, 1 Aug. 1951. (Written while Versal was working temporarily in Logan and searching for a home to rent or buy.)
6. "Teacher's Contract." (13 Aug. 1951) The legal document between Fremont County Joint School District No. A-215 and Thelma Davis hiring her to teach for the 1951-52 school year for a monthly salary of $208.33. Thelma taught at one of the St. Anthony schools.
7. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Versal, who was temporarily employed in Logan, Utah and searching for a possible home to rent or buy, 4 Aug. 1951. In this letter Mom wrote to Dad: [illegible] *doing down there.* [illegible] *in need of an extra* [illegible]
8. Davis, Thelma. Calendar and day planner (March-June 1952).
9. Ostermiller, Ada. [Ada is a lifelong resident of St. Anthony.] Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 2 Dec. 2011. Mom's new St. Anthony's "Vet units," which our family lived in briefly in 1952. Ada, whose own family lived in three different Vet Unit apartments over the years, said they provided housing for 16 families at a time and were located where the armory is now situated in St. Anthony. There were four long buildings (each containing four ground-level apartments) positioned in a square shape, which enclosed a big grassy area where children could play. Each apartment consisted of a living room, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms. Many families, like ours, lived in these units on a temporary basis until more permanent housing could be arranged.
10. Davis, Versal. Letter to Thelma in St. Anthony, 14 May 1952, written after he had moved into our new home in Logan at [illegible] before the rest of the family had moved down from St. Anthony. He told Mom: [illegible]
11. Davis, Thelma. Calendar and day planner (March-June 1952). Our moving day, Friday, 30 May 1952. [illegible]
12. "New Service Manager is Announced." *The Herald-Journal*, May 1952. News article (with photo) reporting the hiring of Versal L. Davis as service manager at Transport Motor Company (The Dodge Dealership) in Logan, Utah. [This was Versal's first job in Logan.]
13. Same as p. 29.
14. "Logan Stake M.I.A. Dance Festival." *The Herald-Journal*, 14 May 1952, Logan, Utah. News article with photo telling of the participants and location of a dance festival held in the Logan High School gymnasium. [Versal and Thelma were dance instructors from a local photography studio.]
15. Same as p. 30.
16. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Versal [in temporary job] in Pinking Button Pitch, California, 23 July 1952, 8:30 p.m.
17. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Mom [in Ogden], 1401 Palm Terrace, Las Vegas, Nevada, 24 Nov. 1952, 8 a.m.
18. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Versal [in temporary job] in Wells, Elko County, Nevada, 25 Nov. 1952, 8 a.m.

The following excerpt from Mom's letter gives a [illegible] Mom and Dad's dance instruction became at times [illegible] Mom and Dad "on the road" [illegible] days our [illegible] given in the daytime and nighttime [illegible] Colleen. [illegible] snow [illegible] and [illegible] Christmas [illegible] ought to teach dance classes. We're in the hard push-push [illegible] and [illegible] are working diligently. But teaching about 60 people requires almost more [illegible] I live thru this year. Enough griping!!

19. "3 Logan Scouters Gain Eagle Award." *The Herald Journal*, 1955, exact date unknown. Dad is shown in full uniform as he was awarded his Eagle at a court of honor held in the Logan Tabernacle. Dad was serving as scout master in Troop 2 of the Logan First Ward at the time.
20. *Brent*, p. 26.
21. "Explorers Run the Mighty Snake," *The Herald Journal*, summer 1958 (exact date unknown).
22. *Brent*, p. 27.
23. Nelson, Debra Davis. "My Personal Record," [Debra's] *Book of Remembrance*, 1966.
24. Davis, Thelma. Letter to LaVel, in basic training, Fort Carson, California, 12 June 1956.
25. Davis, Thelma. Letter to LaVel, in basic training, Fort Carson, California, 9 July1956.
26. Morgan, Edith [staff writer]. "Custom mill ships most of its work out," *The Herald Journal* (Logan's daily newspaper), 25 March 1984.
27. Davis, Thelma. Letter to LaVel and Colleen, in New Haven, Connecticut, 22 Nov. 1956.
28. Davis, Lauris Hall. email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 Jan. 2011.
29. Clark, Tamara Davis. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 8 Jan. 2011.
30. Davis, Thelma. Letter to LaVel and Colleen, in New Haven, Connecticut, 16 Jan. 1957.
31. Davis, Thelma Hall. Untitled, handwritten, single-page document, which is included in a binder along with other personal papers authored by Thelma Hall Davis. It is in the possession of Twila Davis Bird, her daughter.
32. Davis, Versal. Untitled, 10-page manuscript describing Versal and Thelma's weeklong backpacking trip into the Red Castle Lake area of the high Uintah Mountains in northern Utah. It is included in their white, family album binder dated 1954-1970.
33. Davis, Thelma. Letter to LaVel and Colleen in New Haven, Connecticut, 31 Oct. 1956.
34. Davis, Thelma. Letter to LaVel and Colleen, in New Haven, Connecticut, 16 Jan. 1957.
35. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Brian (on mission), 113 Camarillo Ave., Oxnard Beach, Oxnard, California, Wed. Oct. 10, 1962, 2 P.M.
36. *Versal*, pp. 31-32.
37. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Brian (on mission), 8212 Orange, Downey, California, 7 March 1964.
38. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Brian (on mission), 452 East Loyola, Tempe, Arizona, 4 June 1964.
39. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Brian (on mission), 425 E. Loyola, Tempe, Arizona, 22 June 1964.
40. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Brian (on mission), 8212 Orange, Downey, CA, 23 April 1964. *Vel is helping Versal most evenings a bit as Versal has launched [illegible] redwood fence all around the back yard. The fence has a triple purpose: 1. to slow kid traffic a bit as our back lawn has taken a terrific beating the past couple of summers; 2. to help me in flooding the back lawn as we're putting in an [illegible] 3. to fence out [illegible] of building equipment and give us a bit more privacy.*
41. Davis, Thelma. Letter to Brian (on mission), 8212 Orange, Downey, CA, 22 April 1964. Concerning LaVel becoming a policeman Mom wrote in this letter: *Vel is switching jobs. Altho he's managed to ride out the cut-back era [illegible] Wed. he accepted a job [illegible] at the Logan City police force. He [illegible] (competition with 70 other applicants for two jobs!) [illegible] Vel should be sure to [illegible] Lauris asks a*
42. Clark, Tamara Davis. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 8 Jan. 2011. Tami wrote: *There was a lot of camaraderie among the men and they helped each other when [illegible] well. When Dad redid the kitchen and added the back concrete patio I remember several men quietly pull up in their cars and trucks and walk to the back of the house with their tools. They all worked together to get the concrete forms up and the cement poured. I think they came back and did the same when Dad built the front new double garage and concreted the driveway.*
43. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Deb (on mission),Glendale, CA, 19 Nov. 1978.
44. Davis, Thelma Hall. Round-robin letter to family members around the country, 15 Sept. 1971.
45. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 19 March 1975.
46. Davis, Thelma Hall. Personal journal, Saturday, 24 March 1979.



Eight — Alaska

With only a few exceptions, quotations for this chapter were taken exclusively from the trip logs Dad, and later Mom, kept while traveling They are noted as follows:

1966 Log Davis, Versal LaVel. "1966 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of 16 Sept. - 5 Oct., 1966, Versal kept a daily log of his trip to Alaska with LaVel, Lauris, and Reidar Holman, a friend and fellow Ace Mill employee. The log is included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1954-1970."

1974 Log Davis, Versal LaVel and Thelma Hall Davis. "1974 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of their Alaska excursion from Friday, 12 July - Wednesday 21 Aug., 1974, Versal and Thelma kept a daily chronicle of the details of their trip. Participants included Versal, Thelma, Debra, and Duane, as well as the family dog, Coalie. The log is currently included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1971-1974."

1984 Log Davis, Versal LaVel. "1984 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of 21 Aug. - 14 Sept., 1984. Versal kept a daily log, while Thelma kept concise daily notes on her calendar. They both wrote summaries of the trip at it's conclusion. Participants included Versal and Thelma and longtime friends, Wendell and Fern Virgin. The log is currently included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1984."

1. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Personal Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 74, entry dated 30 Jan. 1988. Versal further emphasized his determination to make one more trip to Alaska by writing in this entry: *"Bessie apparently [illegible] go but, whether or not, I expect to go even if I must go alone."* I'm sure Bessie was dubious about another long, long road trip with Dad's worsening health. But he kept hoping and planning. She also had poignant memories of their botched Alaska trip two years earlier, in 1986. (See Chapter Note 3.)
2. *1984 Log*. This is an excerpt from Dad's "Epilogue of the Trip," which he wrote after returning home from this third Alaska trip.
3. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Personal Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 20, entry dated 3 Aug. 1986. Dad wrote this journal entry while in room #212, of the Mackenzie Inn in Fort St. John, British Columbia, about 40 miles along the Alcan Highway from Dawson Creek. Alone, discouraged, and not feeling well, he described the events leading up to his bailing out of the trip. He and Bessie had been traveling with a couple named Nick and Barbara Peterson since July 28, in the Peterson's fifth-wheel RV. It had been an unhappy arrangement because Dad and Barbara did not get along. His physical ailments (back and leg pain) made matters worse and he finally chose to discontinue the trip and fly home to Utah. Bessie, who had never seen Alaska, continued on with Dad's encouragement.

   In another journal entry dated 17 Aug. 1986 (p. 23), Dad wrote that Bessie stayed with the Petersons for another week until she had seen McKinley State Park, then flew from Anchorage back to Utah to join Dad on 9 Sept.
4. *1974 Log*. Mom's entry dated 16 July, 1974, Spokane, Washington: *"Versal says he can describe Expo 74 in one word "Rotten" with the exception of Book of Mormon and Russian pavilions.* [However, in his twelve-year-old scrawl Duane added one more exception to Dad's list: he inserted the words "and bumper cars."] *The rest was poorly org., very commercialized, and carnivalized. The area surrounding was run-down, dirty, shoddy. Most national exhibits were repetitious and poorly planned and arranged.*

   Deb's note in the log regarding Expo 74: *When I first saw the Mormon Pavilion I had to let it sink into my head just what on Earth that crazy shaped*

building was. It sat in the middle of the Spokane River — a gold building split in the middle with 3 great, gold rings connecting the 2 sections — an oversized set of gold plates! It was really impressive. A huge Angel Moroni stood high above the whole affair, commanding respect and attention.

5. *1974 Log*. Dad's entry dated Friday 19 July, 1974, just north of Calgary: *L*
there are hordes of tou
letely filled.
6. *1984 log*, Wednesday, 22 Aug. 1984, written at the Gold Creek Rest Stop, Montana.
7. *1984 log*, "Epilogue of the Trip," written within a day or two after their return from Alaska; it's included at the end of the trip log.
8. *1984 log*, Mom's summary of the trip, Mon. 17 Sept. 1984, included at the end of the log.
9. Ibid.
10. *1984 log*, "Epilogue of the Trip," written within a day or two after their return from Alaska; it's included at the end of the trip log.
11. *1984 log*, Mom's summary of the trip, Mon. 17 Sept. 1984, included at the end of the log.
12. Ibid. Dad also recorded the beaver story in his log entry, Monday, Sept. 4: *This morn*
became muddy but a
air bubbles which rose to the top. Finally,
um from the small pond
body bordering the river. Here it fina
as it quietly watched
13. *1984 log*, Mom's summary of the trip, Mon. 17 Sept. 1984, included at the end of the log.
14. Ibid.
15. *1984 log*, Friday, 7 Sept. 1984.
16. *1984 log*, Mom's summary of the trip, Mon. 17 Sept. 1984, included at the end of the log.



Nine — Mid-Life in Logan

Sources frequently cited in this chapter have been identified by the following abbreviations

Thelma's Journal Davis, Thelma Hall. Thelma's personal/family journal, as recorded on 3-ring binder paper and inserted chronologically into multiple volumes of the "Versal LaVel Davis family history." Journal entries end a few months before her death in March 1985.

Versal's Journal Versal's bound journal, Vol. I (5 Aug. 1977 – 11 June 1981)

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1. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Versal LaVel Davis: Life History*, a 39 page handwritten autobiography recorded on ruled, 3-ring binder paper. The first 31 pages were written in 1977, the last 8 pages on 18 Nov. 1987, pp. 31-32.
2. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Brian (on mission). 8212 Orange, Downey, CA. 23 April 1964.
3. Finlayson, Mary. "The Spirit of Elijah." Encyclopedia of Mormonism, pp. 145-146. *For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Spirit of Elijah is the spirit of family sealing and unity. It is the spirit that motivates the concern to search out ancestral members; and, on their behalf, to perform proxy baptisms, temple endowments, and sealing ordinances. This is seen as fulfillment of a prophecy of Malachi that in the last days "Elijah will turn the hearts [in Hebrew, the emotional part, as the seat of the affections] of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers." (Malachi 4:5-6)*
4. Davis, Versal LaVel. *Versal LaVel Davis: Life History*, a 39 page handwritten autobiography recorded on ruled, 3-ring binder paper. The first 31 pages were written in 1977, the last 8 pages on 18 Nov. 1987, pp. 31-32.
5. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 21 Oct. 1972.
6. Clark, Tamara Davis and John L. Clark. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 8 Jan. 2011.
7. Davis, Lauris Hall. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 Jan. 2011.
8. Clark, Tamara Davis and John L. Clark. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 8 Jan. 2011.
9. Ibid.
10. Davis, Versal Brent. *Versal Brent Davis: From Beginning to (Not Quite) the End*. First 37 single-spaced typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not-yet-completed autobiography. "Years 0-17," drafted in 2001, p. 29.
11. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Lexington, MA, 16 May, 1972.
12. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 25 Sept. 1972.
13. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 6 June 1973.
14. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Lexington, MA, 20 March 1972.
15. Ibid.
16. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Lexington, MA, 16 May 1972.
17. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to all the Davis kids, 28 Jan. 1974.
18. Davis, Versal LaVel. Letter to Thelma, dated "Oct. 1973." Dad tenderly analyzed his feelings about Mom's decision to not work.
19. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 12 Oct. 1973.
20. Davis, Versal LaVel. "1966 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of 16 Sept. – 5 Oct. 1966. Versal kept a daily log of his trip to Alaska with LaVel, Lauris, and Reidar Holman, a friend and fellow Ace Mill employee. The log is included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1954-1970."
21. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 17 June 1976.
22. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 28 Oct. 1976.
23. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 9 May, 1977.
24. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Wednesday, 25 Oct. 1977, p. 7.
25. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, 6 July 1977.
26. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Debra (on mission), Hacienda Heights, CA, 13 March 1978.
27. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Sunday, 14 Aug. 1977, p. 3.
28. Axtell, Tiffany Bird. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 5 April 2011.
29. Leimer, Trisha Bird. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 4 April 2011.
30. Ritchie, Estelle Davis. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 30 March 2011. Mom recorded Dad's typical interaction with the grandchildren (and in this instance his oldest great grandchild) in her journal on 2 May [Jan.] 1982. [illegible]
31. Docken, Penny Davis. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 28 March 2011.
32. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, inside [illegible] 2 Aug. 1977.
33. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest, CA, [illegible] 1977.
34. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Saturday, 4 Feb. 1978, p. 12.
35. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Debra (on mission), Hacienda Heights, CA, 18 Jan. 1978.
36. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Monday, 19 Dec. 1977, p. 10.
37. Thelma's Journal, 24 Feb. 1978.
38. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, several entries during April 1978 describe these trips, whom they went and what they visited.
39. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letters to Richard and Twila Bird during the months of April and May of 1978 describe Dad's various trips and activities relative to his work with LaVel.
40. Thelma's Journal, 26 Feb. 1978.
41. Ibid, Thursday, 4 May 1978 (4:15 p.m. Logan Utah).
42. Ibid.
43. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Monday, 29 May 1978, pp. 17-18.
44. Thelma's Journal, Wednesday, 9 Aug. 1978, 5:30 p.m.
45. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Debra (on mission), Phoenix, AZ, 11 Aug. 1978.
46. Ibid.
47. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Debra (on mission), Glendale, CA, 10 Sept. 1978.
48. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Sunday, 15 Feb. 1981, p. 42.
49. Thelma's Journal, 5 Nov. 1978.

50. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Sunday, 30 Mar. 1980, p. 51.
51. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Debra (on mission), Glendale CA, 28 Oct. 1978.
52. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Tuesday, 19 Sept. 1978. p. 21.
53. "The Economy of the 1980s," from the website: About.com. Also "Early 1980s Recession," from the website: Wikipedia.com
54. Thelma's Journal, 18 Sept. 1981.
55. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 29 April 1976.
56. Sheldon, Michelle Davis. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 25 March 2011.
57. Thelma's Journal, 3 May 1979.
58. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 17 Oct. 1976.
59. *Thelma's Journal*, 14 Feb. 1980.
60. Ibid, 23 Feb. 1980.
61. "Consolidated Meeting Schedule," from the website: LDS.org
62. *Thelma's Journal*, 2 March 1980.
63. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Monday, 5 Mar. 1979, p. 30.
[illegible] involved in a very narrow escape from almost certain death when he [illegible]ped unscathed from a forced landing of his newly acquired airplane. He [illegible] returning to Logan from Elko, Nevada, on Feb. 17 when at 13000 ft. his engine developed an oil leak. This sprayed back over the cowling and in 2 or 3 [illegible] glide to a landing somewhere. He chose Thiokol airport and headed there (25 miles distant). About 10 minutes later he touched snow just about 25 to 30 ft. from the paved runway. The nose wheel collapsed then the two support wheels [illegible] and [illegible] the plane upon the surface runway. Had the plane been about 1 ft. lower, it very likely would have crashed head on in the bank, which supported the runway. It is almost miraculous to think that in 25 [illegible] at [illegible] at altitude that one more foot or lower descent could have caused death on impact. All of us are grateful for his escape. The plane will be rebuilt at Logan. Cost will be about $25,000.00. Fortunately, it [illegible]
64. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 15 Nov. 1972.
65. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 29 Jan. 1973.
66. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 9 Mar. 1973.
67. *Thelma's Journal*, 30 March 1979.
68. Nelson, Debra Davis. Her original "Coalie" drawing was included as a small sketch in the margins on page 6 of a letter her mother, Thelma Hall Davis, wrote to family members, 6 March 1974. She was 18.
69. *Thelma's Journal*, 13 Feb. 1979.
70. Davis, Versal LaVel. "1979 Canada Log," 24 July 1979, p. 2.
71. Davis, Thelma Hall. "1979 Canada Log," 30 July 1979, p. 15.
72. Davis, Thelma Hall. "1979 Canada Log," 27 July 1979, pp. 10-12.
73. Davis, Thelma Hall. "1979 Canada Log," 31 July 1979, p. 19.
74. *Thelma's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1979, p. 161.
75. "The Logan Temple: 1884-1984" (booklet), The Logan Temple Centennial Commemoration Committee, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984, Logan, Utah, p. 34.
76. Davis, Thelma Hall. "Versal LaVel Davis family history." Notes taken during the 6th Logan Temple dedicatory session, 14 March 1979.
77. *Thelma's Journal*, 1 Feb. 1979.
78. Ibid, 24 April 1980.
79. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 27 Feb. 1976.
80. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 13 Dec. 1973.
81. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 28 Jan. 1974.
82. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, Monday, 4 Feb. 1978, p. 12.
83. Ibid, Monday, 19 Sept 1978, p. 21.
84. Ibid, Monday, 18 Oct. 1979, p. 37.
85. Ibid, Monday, 5 Oct. 1980, p. 62.
86. Ibid, Monday, 5 Nov. 1979, p. 40.
87. *Thelma's Journal*, 7 Aug. 1973, p. 4.
88. Ibid, 3 May 1979.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid, Sunday, 3 Feb. 1980
91. Ibid, 14 Feb. 1980.
92. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. I, 30 March 1980, p. 51.
93. *Thelma's Journal*, 13 April 1980.
94. Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. III, p. 29, 19 Sept. 1982.

Ten — Our Mission

Sources frequently cited in this chapter have been identified by the following abbreviations:

Flashback Davis, Versal LaVel. Dad recorded his *Flashbacks* (short, capsule accounts of individual events in his life) in the back sections of his four, bound, personal journals between 1977 and 1988.

Mission Davis, Thelma Hall. Mission Journals, 3 volumes bound in blue, metal-spiral-ring binders. The journals contain Thelma's daily mission entries and photographs. Nov. 1980-Dec. 12981.

Versal Davis, Versal LaVel. Mission Journals, Nov. 1980-Dec. 1981. Versal's missionary entries are included in his regular, personal journals in volumes I, II, and III.

1. *Versal*, Sunday, 30 March 1980, Vol. I, p. 49.
2. *Versal'*, Saturday, 19 July 1980, Vol, I, p. 52.
3. *Versal*, Sunday, 5 Oct. 1980, Vol. I, p. 62.
4. "Welfare Services Missionaries" packet, sent by the Missionary Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 20 Aug. 1980. The packet included: a list of world locations welfare services missionaries were serving, information regarding Indian culture, instructions regarding the Missionary Training Center in Provo, travel instructions, and suggestions on what to take and what to leave home.
5. Mangum, Garth L. "Welfare Services." *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Macmillan Press, 1992. Duties of welfare services missionaries, p. 1554.
6. Davis, Thelma Hall. Personal journal, Wednesday, 20 Aug. 1980. *Our mission call almost bombed me. Versal accepted it serious[illegible] any qualms. And he was very surprised at my reaction. I cried and cried over it, so much so that Sun. I did go to sacrament meeting, then slipped out and came home. Soon, noticing that I was gone, Versal came home and together, alone, we analyzed my problems, Versal patiently, tenderly made some commitments to me, then gave me a blessing. He said as we prepared for the blessing: "Do you realize that this is the first time in all our years together that you've asked for a blessing?" And he was right.*

My hangups were: 1. The 23rd of Oct. date, especially when Pres. McAllister had kept urging "as soon as possible." And, if we could have gone about 1 Sept., we would be home shortly after Duane would arrive home from his mission. This I wanted very much! 2. Versal had turned down one contract thinking we'd be going (he'd been asked to build some railings for a church here). He'd also given the mill notice. He can't just sit around, so he thinks of places we can go for instance to Vancouver, Seattle, St. Anthony, for a month of wandering. I just don't enjoy traveling in the little pickup like I did in the van! And we can't afford too much travel. 3. We'd promised Tam and John that we'd turn the place over to them as soon as possible and this extends our double occupancy to 5 months. Tam and John have been superb and their 3 children very well behaved. But they're kids — and Versal has a short fuse and my nerves aren't what they were 20 years ago. Often Versal gets on the mower and leaves, but I'm left to weather the noise or hassle or whatever. And this makes me resentful. 4. Too, the pressures of my R.S. work have increased with the expanding welfare program. 5. Of course, Versal's constantly aching right leg has been and is a nagging source of concern. . . .Versal bore a strong testimony to me of the importance of our mission and blessed me for help in overcoming this weird negativism. And that we'd have the health and strength to accomplish this assignment, though its far different than what we'd anticipated
7. *Flashback*, "In a Sense, He Did Go," Vol. II, p. 21.
8. *Flashback*, "Old Fritz and the Howard Girl," Vol.
9. *Mission*, 23 Nov. 1980, Vol. I, p.47.
10. *Mission*, 13 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 199.
11. *Mission*, 23 Nov. 1980, Vol. I, p. 46.
12. *Mission*, 19 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 147.
13. *Mission*, 7 March 1981, Vol. II., p. 39. Mom quoted more from the book, "Yuman Tribes of the Gila River" regarding dogs: *"Some people dream of dogs who appear as persons. The dogs tell how they are abused by people and instruct the dreamer to tell this."* Then Mom added: *Maricopa believe dogs are persons — that it is why Kutox (Gylurd's great, great grandfather) did not eat the [illegible] answering cats*
14. *Flashback*, "I'm Apache!," Journal III, p. 160.
15. *Mission*, 22 Nov. 1980,Vol. I, p. 42a.
16. *Mission*, Vol. III, p. 15.
17. *Flashback*, "Suspicious Indians," Vol. I, p. 77 (written 2 Dec. 1980. It was originally titled, "A True Incident.")
18. *Flashback*, "Sacrament Bread Thieves," Journal I, p. 89, 28 Dec. 1980.



19. *Mission*, 3 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 185.
20. *Mission*, 21 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 216.
21. *Flashback*, "As The Sun's First Rays," Vol, I, p. 90-100. (written 9 Jan. 1981.)
22. Ibid, p. 97.
23. *Flashback*, "Why the Axe?" Vol. I, pp. 110-113. (written 2 March 1981.)
24. *Mission*, 30 Dec. 1980, Vol. I, p. 106.
25. *Mission*, 16 Jan. 1981.
26. *Versal*, 16 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 7.
27. *Mission*, 4 May 1981, Vol. II, p. 108.
28. *Mission*, 2 Dec. 1980, Vol. I, p. 63.
29. *Mission*, 10 Dec. 1980, Vol. I, p. 74.
30. *Mission*, 10 Feb. 1981, Vol. I, p. 184.
31. *Mission*, For the life of me I can't find this quote in Mom's mission journal, but I know it's in there somewhere. I did find these two references to Dad's workshop, though: *Versal spent much of the day cleaning out the air conditioner room at the back of the church, transferring the big R.S. tables from the storage room into there and some other items. Thus he freed enough space so a workbench is made.* ((16 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 141). And, *A welcome at-home day. Versal has made some sawhorses and finished shelves in his work room. He came in saying, "It it seems so good to have a work area again and my tools organized."* (22 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 153)
32. *Mission*, 19 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 148.
33. *Mission*, 30 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 161.
34. *Mission*, 24 Feb. 1981, Vol. II, p. 19.
35. *Mission*, 2 Mar. 1981, Vol. II, p. 32.
36. *Mission*, 15 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 141.
37. *Mission*, 20 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, pp. 150-151.
38. *Mission*, 6 Mar. 1981, Vol. II, p. 37.
39. *Mission*, 22 Apr. 1981, Vol. II, p. 91.
40. *Mission*, 25 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 156.
41. *Mission*, 16 Mar. 1981, Vol. II, p. 54.
42. *Mission*, 1 Jan. 1981, Vol, I, p. 109.
43. *Flashback*, "Indian Superstition" Vol. I, pp. 119-121. (written 1 March 1981.)
44. *Mission*, 28 April 1981, Vol. II, p. 99.
45. *Mission*, 4 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 117.
46. *Mission*, 21 Dec. 1980, Vol. I, p. 89.
47. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Debra, who was working for LaVel in Hutto, TX, 28 May 1981.
48. *Mission*, 17 Jan. 1981, Vol. I, p. 145.
49. *Mission*, 15 July 1981, Vol, II, p. 207.
50. *Mission*, 28 May, 1981, Vol. II, p. 138.
51. *Mission*, 9 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 194.
52. *Versal*, 28 May 1981, Vol. I, pp. 133-134.
53. *Versal*, 1 July 1981, Vol. I, p. 4.
54. *Mission*, 13 June 1981, Vol. II, p. 156.
55. Ibid, p. 158.
56. *Mission*, 5 July 1981, Vol. I, p. 187.
57. *Versal*, 7 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 5.
58. *Mission*, 5 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 188.
59. Ibid, p. 59.
60. Ibid.
61. *Mission*, 6 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 190.
62. *Mission*, "spring" 1981, Vol. II, p. 79.
63. *Mission*, 2 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 182.
64. *Mission*, 21 Sept. 1981, Vol. III, p. 68.
65. Ibid, pp. 68-69.
66. *Mission*, 21 Sept. 1981, Vol. II, p. 215.
67. *Mission*, 15 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 207.
68. *Mission*, 5 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 187.
69. *Mission*, 13 Sept. 1981, Vol. III, p. 62.
70. *Mission*, 27 Sept. 1981, Vol. III, p. 76
71. *Mission*, 18 Aug. 1981, Vol. III, p. 27.
72. *Mission*, 10 July 1981, Vol. II, p. 196
73. *Mission*, 9 Aug. 1981, Vol. III, p. 14
74. *Mission*, 24 Oct. 1981, Vol. III, p. 107
75. *Mission*, 30 Nov. 1981, Vol. III, p. 153
76. *Flashback*, "Tearful Goodbyes" (the original title was "Can Indians Show Deep Emotion?"), Vol. II, p. 22.
77. *Mission*, 6 Dec. 1981, Vol. III, pp. 165-167
78. Davis, Thelma Hall. Personal Journal, 10 May 1983
79. Davis, Thelma Hall. Telephone Notes taken during phone call with Pres. Bartlett (president of the Maricopa Branch), 26 April 1983
80. Davis, Thelma Hall. Personal Journal, 29 April 1983

Eleven — Our Older Years

Sources frequently cited in this chapter have been identified by the following abbreviations:

Journal III Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal Vol. III (15 Oct. 1981 - 1 Jan. 1986) with "Flashbacks on pp. 129-176

Thelma's Journal Davis, Thelma Hall. Thelma's personal/family journal as recorded on 3-ring binder paper and inserted chronologically into multiple volumes of the Versal LaVel Davis family history. Journal entries end a few months before her death in March 1985.

Phone Notes Davis, Thelma Hall. In her later years Mom kept phenomenal, detailed notes whenever she had telephone conversations with family members. They accurately described complete conversations. She included these notes chronologically in the Versal LaVel Davis Family History Albums.

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1. *Journal III*, p. 14, 14 Jan 1982
2. *Thelma's Journal*, 19 Jan. 1982.
3. Ibid. 1 Feb. 1982.
4. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Duane (on mission), Farmington, MS, 8 Feb. 1982.
5. Davis, Versal LaVel. Letter to Bernice Wright (in St. Anthony, ID), 4 Feb. 1982.
6. Ibid.
7. *Thelma's Journal*. 12 Feb. 1982
8. Ibid. Friday (the day after Thanksgiving), 28 Nov. 1978.
9. Ibid. 2 Dec. 1978.
10. Flynn, Kevin. "Artist Found Beaten to Death." *The Rocky Mountain News*, 13 Feb. 1982, p. 4.

    Almost three decades after her death, Carol's fellow artist and housemate Joan Bondy was interviewed for a "Cold Case" blog. She told a *Denver Post* reporter *"It was the custom of attractive, young people in the area to gravitate to Carol's home. She had a large, vivacious personality. Her home was a place where there were parties and eating and drinking. [illegible] and I smoked weed and pigeon. Interestingly, Carol became interested in the upper-scale trade and father of Indian and many drugs. Money was passing through her hands. [illegible] found $10,000 worth of cocaine and a large amount of cash, said to be $13,000, in a safe deposit box under Carol's name. I agree with the assessment of police that Carol was killed by someone in the drug trade. Carol had gotten herself entangled with the wrong, almost possibly even getting involved with a narcotics ring. She could be a shrewd negotiator when it came to financial matters. She had a strong personality, but in drug circles, [illegible] you're a big player, you don't [illegible] on dead."* (Gallegos, Koreen. "Artist Succumbs Entangled in Drug Trade." Cold Cases blogs. *The Denver Post*, 21 Nov. 2011)

    
11. Michaud, Sgt. David. Personal interview. Versal and DeAnn Davis and Trish Bird at the Denver Police Station, Denver, Colorado, 18 Feb. 1982.
12. *Thelma's Journal*. 9 April 1982.
13. Davis, Thelma Hall. Letter to Debra (in Texas), 4 May 1982.
14. *Thelma's Journal*. 28 May 1983.
15. "Fishing Season Opens" clipping, from the publication, "Trailhead," produced by the Idaho Travel Council, 1980. (This clipping was included in Bernice Wright's living room wall.)
16. *Thelma's Journal*. 19 June 1982.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid. 30 June 1982.
19. *Thelma's Journal*. 23 July 1982.
20. Ibid. 24 July 1982.
21. Ibid. 28 July 1982.
22. Ibid. 3 Aug. 1982.
23. Ibid. 18 Aug. 1982.
24. Ibid. 25 Aug. 1982.
25. Ibid. 28 Aug. 1982.
26. Ibid. 3 Sept. 1982.
27. Ibid. 31 Aug. 1982.
28. *Journal III*, p. 28, 19 Sept. 1982.
29. *Thelma's journal*, 9 Oct. 1982.
30. Ibid. 26 Feb. 1983.
31. Ibid. 5 Jan. 1983.
32. Ibid. 30 Sept. 1982.
33. Ibid. 29 Oct. 1982. More than a month after this event, Thelma still was not sure if "[illegible] a [illegible] [illegible]." Later, Versal was certain it was a

53 [illegible] 1 Nov. 1982.
54 [illegible] 2 Nov. 1982.
55 Ibid. 4 Nov. 1982. (written while with Dad in the Logan Regional Hospital)
57 [illegible] p. 29, 3 Nov. 1982.
58 Ibid. 26 March 1983.
59 Ibid. 3 March 1983.
40 Davis, Thelma Hall. "Phone note" written during telephone conversation with President Bartlett, president of the Maricopa Branch on the Gila Valley Indian Reservation near Phoenix, AZ, Tuesday 26 Apr. 1983.
41 *Thelma's Journal.* 29 April 1983.
42. Ibid. 6 June 1983.
43 Ibid. 14 June 1983. Following is the way Mom described her first priesthood healing blessing, which her father gave her not long after her family moved to a remote dry farm in the Upper Snake River Valley in 1919. She was almost three.

Leda and I had a new world to explore. Papa had brought a milk cow and [illegible]. The other animals were many little ground squirrels, some very [illegible] animals, which we could hear at night.

We had no close neighbors, could see no other houses, just rolling hills with [illegible] in some places.

After the crops were all in, Papa began to paint and fix-up our humble little home.

And then it happened — a miracle!

I found a can with some kind in it. I drank it. It was turpentine. Of course, I was instantly in the direst of agony and danger! Papa administered to me — and I was healed instantly! Completely! (Mom's history in the Jick Hall book, page labeled at top,"summer 1919, Farnum, p. 27)

44 Davis, Thelma Hall. "1983 Canada Log." 22 Aug. 1983.
44. Ibid. 25 Aug. 1983.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid. 10 Sept. 1983.
47. *Phone Note.* Deb, 14 Sept. 1983.
48. Ibid. Deb, 16 Sept. 1983.
49. Ibid. Deb, 19 Sept. 1983.
50. Davis, Thelma Hall. Calendar Notes, September 1983.
51. Ibid.
52. *Thelma's Journal.* 8 Oct. 1983.
53. Ibid. 14 Feb. 1984.
54 Ibid.
55. Ibid. 15 Feb. 1984.
56. *Thelma's Journal.* 22 Feb 1984.
57. Ibid.
58. *Thelma's Journal.* 11-17 March 1984.
59. Ibid
60. Ibid.
61. Thelma's handwritten caption is included with this photo in the Versal LaVel Davis Family History Binder, 26 Feb. 1984.
62. *Thelma's Journal.* 15 April 1984.
63. Davis, Thelma Hall. Calendar Note, 25 March 1984.
64. Ibid. 17 June 1984.
65. Thelma's Journal. 19 June 1984.
66. *Journal III.* p. 58, 18 Jan. 1984.
67. Ibid. p. 65, 12 Aug. 1984.
68. Davis, Versal LaVel. "1984 Alaska Log" An excerpt from Dad's "Epilogue of the Trip," which he wrote after returning home from this third Alaska trip.
69. *Journal III.* p. 69, 4 Oct. 1984.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid. p. 69, 30 Sept. 1984.
72. Ibid. p. 72, 1 Nov. 1984.
73. Davis, Versal LaVel. This quotation was written by Dad in a posthumous summary of the last few months of Mom's illness, her death, and her funeral included in the last volume of the "Versal LaVel Davis family history." The history is embodied in thirteen white, 3-inch, 3-ring binders filled with chronological letters written to and received from family and friends, photographs, news clippings, personal documents, and greeting cards. The heart of the history, however, are Mom's unique "telephone notes", calendar notes, and personal journal entries. Her handwritten record ends on 4 March 1985, three weeks before her death of cancer on 29 March 1985.
74. *Journal III.* p. 10, 9 Feb. 1985.
75. Davis, Thelma Hall. Calendar Note. 3 Feb. 1985.
76. Davis, Versal LaVel. Journal IV, p. 99, 31 Jan. 1989.



Twelve — Bessie and Me

Sources frequently cited in this chapter have been identified by the following abbreviations

Journal IV Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. IV (10 Feb. 1986 - 31 Jan. 1989), with "Flashbacks" on pp. 101-174.

Journal V Davis, Versal LaVel. Personal Journal, Vol. V (19 Feb. 1989 - 31 May 1989).

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1. Affleck, Becce Alvord. Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 21 June 2011.
2. Nielsen, Karen Alvord. Obituary, "Bessie Martha Glaurser Alvord Davis" *The Herald Journal*, Logan, Utah, June 29, 2001, p. A10.
3. Ibid.
4. Davis, Thelma Hall. Thelma's personal/family journal, as recorded on 3-ring binder paper and inserted chronologically into multiple volumes of the "Versal LaVel Davis family history," 8 Oct. 1983.

   The entry that indicates Bessie was Mom's visiting teacher reads: *First of all, it's a beautiful, sunny fall day. Invigorating. Temperature in the 70's. Perfect for Versal and Bruno Ingold to go fishing up on Condie in the old tin boat. Perfect for me to stay home and do some of the things I've wanted to do, needed to do. I borrowed Nellie's steam-juicer and finished bottling grape juice (our vines have produced prolifically). I gave grapes to Nellie and Bessie Alvord when they stopped by for a brief visit yesterday, too. I also baked four loaves of banana bread.*
5. Davis, Versal L. Personal, handwritten note, undated. It is included as a separate document in his *Flashbacks* album.
6. *Journal IV,* p. 2, 14 Jan. 1986.
7. Ibid, p. 14, 24 April, 1986.
8. Ibid, p. 5, 6 Feb. 1986.
9. Ibid, p. 2, 14 Jan. 1986.
10. Ibid, p. 9, 27 Feb. 1986.
11. Ibid, p. 18, 11 July 1986.
12. Ibid, pp. 20-21 , 3 Aug. 1986.
13. Ibid, p. 22, 8 Aug. 1986.
14. Ibid, p. 74, 30 Jan. 1988.
15. Ibid, p. 97, 26 Dec. 1988.
16. Nielsen, Karen Alvord. Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 22 June 2011.
17. *Journal IV,* p. 64, 13 Aug. 1987.
18. Davis, Tawny Jetawn. Email to Twila Davis Bird, 10 April 2011.
19. *Journal IV,* p. 10, 13 March 1986.
20. Ibid, p. 25, 5 Sept. 1986.
21. Ibid, p. 60, 26 July 1987. Dad's report of his medical status in this journal entry reads: *Last week I finally went to see Dr. Merrill Daines. I've experienced increasing probs with my ticker and I promised Bessie that I would consult him. I did not learn anything new. My diabetes is about normal and my bone cancer is apparently in remission at this time. I matured about possible open heart surgery but I am afraid such would be very, very expensive. Thus I will not permit unless such can be done under Medicare limits. Time will yet determine my course of action.*
22. *Journal IV,* p. 52, 22 April 1987.
23. Ibid. p. 66, 11 Sept. 1987.
24. Ibid. p. 91, 17 Aug. 1988.
25. Ibid. p. 66, 11 Sept. 1987.
26. *Journal V,* p. 5, 20 March 1989. A year earlier, shortly after the family reunion held in July 1988, Dad expressed his optimism regarding the family in a different journal entry:

    In speaking to the separate family members I learned that every one of them enjoyed the reunion. I'm so grateful myself. I feel that we cemented a togetherness pattern that should continue for many years to come. As time goes by each family unit will eventually honor its own need for unity. This is normal as it represents a continuing growth of family history.

    I do have some anxiety regarding some of them but I honestly feel that such can and hopefully will diminish as time goes by. I'm very proud of all of them and I'm certain that Mom is aware and happy also.

    . . . During all this I was able to hold personal interviews with each. These were revealing and very informative. After such I have developed a deep peace of mind. (Dad's Journal, Vol. IV, p. 88, 12 July 1988.)
27. *Journal IV,* p. 59, 17 July 1987.
28. Ibid. p. 84, 12 July 1988. In an entry a month earlier he similarly wrote:

    LaVel and I just returned from a fishing trip to Condie Reservoir. Our luck was very good as we limited out. It is truly wonderful to be able to join members of the family on such occasions. I also appreciate having help on

loading and unloading the boat. My strength is slowly but surely ebbing away. (Personal Journal, Vol. IV, p. 83, 4 June 1988.) What's interesting with this entry is that LaVel wasn't in much better shape than Dad. He'd had a heart attack two months earlier followed by colon cancer surgery a month later where a large section of his large intestine had been removed. LaVel couldn't have been very helpful. Two lame ducks fishing together!

29. Ibid. p. 58, 30 June 1987.
30. Ibid. p. 65, 18 Aug. 1987.
31. Ibid. p. 85, 12 July 1988.
32. Ibid. p. 73, 30 Jan. 1988.
33. Ibid. p. 60, 26 July 1987.
34. Ibid. pp. 68-69, 21 Oct. 1987.
35. Ibid. p. 66, 11 Sept. 1987.
36. Ibid. p. 64, 13 Aug. 1987.
37. *Journal V*, p. 2, 19 Feb. 1989.
38. Ibid, p. 3, 6 March 1989.
39. *Journal IV*, p. 52, 22 April, 1987.
40. Ibid. p. 5, 6 Feb. 1986.
41. Ibid. pp. 77-78, 6 Feb. 1988.
42. Ibid. pp. 20-21, 3 Aug. 1986.
43. Ibid. p. 67, 27 Sept. 1987.
44. Ibid. p. 90, 17 Aug. 1988.
45. Ibid. p. 58, 30 June 1987.
46. Ibid. p. 92, 15 Sept. 1988. (Dad wrote an extensive entry about Bert, Vera, Bernice and Myrtle in his Journal IV, p. 29, 21 Oct. 1986.)
47. Ibid. p. 94, 22 Oct. 1988 and p. 95, 9 Nov. 1988. Also, Vol. V, p. 4, 20 March 1989.
48. *Journal V*, p. 3, 20 March 1989. Dad's retorical question wondering how long he would be able to sing (as his health failed) was answered by the number of times he performed at various functions into his last year of life including: Vera's funeral, a wedding reception, Bessie's grandson's mission farewell, sacrament meeting (several times), and AARP functions. He recorded several of his solo performances, which I now have in digital format.
50. Ibid. p. 4.
51. *Journal IV*, p. 59, 17 July 1987.
52. Ibid. p. 94, 22 Oct. 1988.
53. *Journal V*, p. 5, 20 March 1989.
54. *Journal IV*, p. 57, 20 June 1987.
55. *Journal V*, p. 2, 6 March 1989.
56. Ibid. p. 7, 14 April 1989.
57. Bird, Twila Davis. Letter to daughters Trisha and Raquelle at the BYU Jerusalem Center in Israel, 10 April 1989.
58. Davis, Versal LaVel. Letter to his adult children, 20 April 1989
59. Bird, Twila Davis. Letter to daughters Trisha and Raquelle at the BYU Jerusalem Center in Israel, 27 May 1989.
60. *Journal V*, p. 7, 31 May 1989.
61. Davis, Duane McDaniel. Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 22 June 2011.
62. Clark, Tami Davis. Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 21 June 2011
63. Spence, Corrette Davis. Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 23 June 2011.



Sources

VLD

Listed here are the sources I have cited in this book. In addition to Dad's (Versal's) *Flashbacks* which he wrote in the 1980s and his brief autobiography (begun in 1977, completed in 1987, I've used accounts from Mom (Thelma), my brothers and sisters, extended family members, and friends to fill in additional details of his life. My frequent use of direct quotations may have made the flow of the narrative more stilted, but hopefully it has enhanced this history's authority and credibility. I tried to use other voices only when necessary and keep Versal in the foretront telling his own stories. All of the documents listed below are in my possession unless otherwise noted

Versal's Accounts

Davis, Versal LaVel. *Autobiography of Versal LaVel Davis*, 20 Dec. 1964, Logan, Utah. At the top of this 8-page, document recorded on 3-ring binder paper, Versal penned, *"Note - The following pages represent a rough draft which I did not refine."* The original is included in Dad's "Flashbacks" binder.

---------. "1966 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of 16 Sept. - 5 Oct., 1966, Versal kept a daily log of his trip to Alaska with LaVel, Lauris, and Reidar Holman, a friend and fellow Ace Mill employee. The log is included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1954-1970."

---------. "1974 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of their Alaska excursion from Friday, 12 July - Wednesday 21 August, 1974, Versal and Thelma kept a daily chronicle of the details of their trip. Participants included Versal, Thelma, Debra, and Duane, as well as the family dog, Coalie. The log is currently included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1971-1974."

---------. "1979 Canada Log." Covering the dates of their Canadian excursion from Monday, 24 July - Thursday, 16 Aug. 1979. Versal and Thelma drove as far north as Bela Coola, British Colombia, near the Pacific Coast then back again, a 5,000 mile trip. The log is included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1979."

---------. "1984 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of 21 Aug. - 14 Sept., 1984. Versal kept a daily log, while Thelma kept concise daily notes. They both wrote summaries of the trip at it's conclusion. Participants included Versal and Thelma and their longtime friends, Wendell and Fern Virgin. The log is currently included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1984."

---------. "Brief History of Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis, Wife of John Gould Davis" an 8-page addendum to his more extensive, handwritten history of his father titled *"Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son."*

---------. Deposition recorded on 15 Aug 1977 regarding the evolution of his name. The handwritten document is in the possession of his daughter, Twila Davis Bird.

---------. "Explanatory Note by VLD." A 9-page addendum to Thelma's combination autobiography and history of her parents titled *The Jick and Ruby Hall Family History*. The history was never completed for Thelma died of cancer, ending her account with her description of her high school graduation in 1934. Versal promised Thelma before she died he would complete her history through her college and courtship years to the time of their marriage in 1937. This addendum, written on 10 April 1985 (only two weeks following her death) fulfilled that promise.

---------. "Farm Record Book." An account of farm expenditures and income kept by Versal on a daily basis for the year beginning 1 Jan 1943. The brown, 16-page, fill-in-the-blanks booklet was printed by the United States Department of Agriculture and designed to help farmers determine their net worth and income for a given year.

---------. *Flashbacks* (short, capsule accounts of individual events in his life), recorded in four, bound, personal journals between 1977 and 1988. Versal's *Flashbacks* were duplicated and distributed in 3-ring binders to his children in two installments — the first in 1984, the second in 1988.

---------. "Floyd Ervin Davis," a 3-page, handwritten summary of his brother, Floyd's, life, 1981. The biographical sketch is included with similar mini-biographies of his other brothers and sisters at the back of the binder containing the 70-page history of his father titled *"Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son."*

---------. Letter to his adult children, 20 April 1989.

---------. Letter to Bernice Wright (in St. Anthony, ID), 4 Feb. 1982.

---------. Letter to Thelma in St. Anthony, 1 Aug. 1951. (Written while Versal was working temporarily in Logan, while searching for a home to rent or buy.)

---------. Letter to Thelma in St. Anthony, 14 May 1952, written after he had moved into our new home in Logan (at 371 W. 2nd South) but before the rest of the family had moved down from St. Anthony.

---------. Letter to Thelma in Logan, "Oct. 1973."

---------. *"Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son,"* a currently unpublished biographical account, which includes 70 handwritten pages plus many photographs, documents, and sketches.

---------. "Merlie Damaris Davis," a 4-page, handwritten summary of his sister, Merlie's, life, 1981. The biographical sketch is included with similar mini-biographies of his other brothers and sisters at the back of the binder containing the 70-page history of his father titled *"Life History of John Gould Davis by Versal L. Davis, his son.*

---------. Mission Journals, Nov. 1980-Dec. 1981. Versal's missionary entries are included in his regular, personal journals in volumes I, II, and III.

---------. Personal interview (Twila Davis Bird) at Twila's home in Lakewood, Colorado, 5 Aug. 1984. Taped and transcribed. On this occasion Versal told of his experience with a dark spirit as recorded in the Flashback titled "A Lesson Learned the Hard Way."

---------. Personal Journals, 5 volumes:
Vol. I (5 Aug. 1977 - 11 June 1981), with "Flashbacks" on pp. 141-190.
Vol. II (18 June 1981 - 17 Aug. 1981), with "Flashbacks" on pp. 14-174.
Vol. III (5 Oct. 1981 - 1 Jan. 1986), with "Flashbacks on pp. 129-176.
Vol. IV (10 Feb. 1986 - 31 Jan. 1989), with "Flashbacks" on pp. 101-174.
Vol. V (19 Feb. 1989 - 31 May 1989).

---------. untitled, 10-page manuscript describing Versal and Thelma's weeklong backpacking trip into the Red Castle Lake area of the high Uintah Mountains in northern Utah. It is included in their white, family album binder dated 1954-1970.

---------. *Versal LaVel Davis Life History*, a 39-page handwritten autobiography recorded on ruled, 3-ring binder paper. The first 31 pages were written in 1977, the last 8 pages on 18 Nov. 1987.

Thelma's Accounts

Davis, Thelma Hall. "1974 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of their Alaska excursion from Friday, 12 July - Wednesday 21 August, 1974, Versal and Thelma kept a daily chronicle of the details of their trip. Participants included Versal, Thelma, Debra, and Duane, as well as the family dog, Coalie. The log is currently included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1971-1974."

---------. "1979 Canada Log." Covering the dates of their Canadian excursion from Monday, 24 July - Thursday, 16 Aug. 1979. Versal and Thelma drove as far north as Bela Coola, British Colombia, near the Pacific Coast then back again a 5,000 mile trip. The log is included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1979."

---------. "1983 Canada Log." Covering the dates of 22 Aug - 3 Sept. 1983. Versal and Thelma traveled up into British Columbia with Fern and Wendell Virgin and intended to go on to Alaska but cut the trip short when Fern developed some physical problems. The log is included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family Album 1983."

---------. "1984 Alaska Log." Covering the dates of 21 Aug. - 14 Sept., 1984. Versal kept a daily log, while Thelma kept concise daily notes. They both wrote summaries of the trip at it's conclusion. Participants included Versal and Thelma and their longtime friends, Wendell and Fern Virgin. The log is currently included in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Album, 1984."

---------. *Autobiography of Thelma Hall Davis*. Written 1-19 March 1983; updated Feb 1984. Thelma wrote this 10-page, handwritten document at the request of

June Reading, Relief Society President in the Logan First Ward. In her journal (21 March 1983) Thelma recorded: *"Pres. June Reading asked me [illegible] biography of my life and submit that and my picture for a ward history. I finished that."* A copy of the history is in the Logan First Ward historical records. Twila Davis Bird has the original.

----------. "Baby's Seven Year Record." (Brent's Baby Book, 1940-1947), a blue-satin, padded, baby album with gold writing and decorations on the cover in which Thelma kept a record of Brent's infancy and early childhood. It includes photos, accounts of holiday celebrations & gifts, important milestones in his development, descriptions of memorable incidents in his life, and records of growth, first words, first teeth.

----------. "Birth of Clinton LaVel Davis." a 6-page, handwritten document on 3-ring binder paper recounting the birth of Thelma and Versal's oldest child, Clinton LaVel Davis, written 24 Feb. 1972.

----------. Calendar and day planner (March-June 1952). The planner contains a record of the transition months, when Mom and Dad sold their St. Anthony home, moved temporarily into the "Vet's Unit," then later moved to Logan. These were the earliest of Mom's "calendar notes" — not as detailed or complete as the ones she kept in her later years but filled with interesting information, nonetheless.

----------. Calendar Notes. During her later years Mom kept scrupulous "calendar notes" which preserved meticulous details of Davis family life. In tiny, compact handwriting she recorded each day's activities in calendar squares. These monthly calendars with their notes are included chronologically in the Versal LaVel Davis Family History albums.

----------. "I Can't Stay." A 1968 essay written for a Utah State University English class, while Thelma attended there in pursuit of her bachelor of arts degree. The story is based on a true event, Versal's rescue of a young woman from drowning at Island Park Reservoir in July 1946.

----------. *Jick and Ruby Hall Family History*, 1984. A 140-page, unpublished biography of Thelma's parents, with an emphasis on her own history. The document contains numerous maps, photographs, documents, and newspaper clippings.

----------. Letter to Versal, temporarily in Logan, Utah, working and searching for a possible home to rent or buy, 1 Aug. 1951.

----------. Letter to LaVel, in Air Force basic training, Fort Carson, CA, 12 June 1956

----------. Letter to LaVel, in Air Force basic training, Fort Carson, CA, 9 July1956.

----------. Letter to LaVel and Colleen, in New Haven, CT, 31 Oct. 1956.

----------. Letter to LaVel and Colleen, in New Haven, CT, 22 Nov. 1956.

----------. Letter to LaVel and Colleen, in New Haven, CT, 16 Jan. 1957.

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 113 Camarillo Ave., Oxnard, CA, 10 Oct. 1962.

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 6565 Thelma, Buena Park, CA, 23 July 1963.

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 1207 Palm Terrace, Las Vegas, NV, 24 Nov. 1963

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 2121 Sutro Way, Las Vagas, NV, 9 Jan. 1964.

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 8212 Orange, Downey, CA, 7 March 1964

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 8212 Orange, Downey, CA, 22 April 1964

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 452 E. Loyola, Tempe, AZ, 4 June 1964.

----------. Letter to Brian (on mission), 425 E. Loyola, Tempe, AZ, 22 June 1964

----------. Letter (roundrobin to family around the country) 15 Sept. 1971

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Lexington MA, 20 Mar. 1972.

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Lexington MA, 16 May, 1972.

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 25 Sept. 1972.

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 15 Nov. 1972.

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 21 Oct. 1972

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 29 Jan. 1973

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 9 Mar. 1973

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 6 June 1973

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 12 Oct. 1973

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 13 Dec. 1973

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 16 Dec. 1974

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 28 Jan. 1974

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 19 March 1975

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 27 Feb. 1976

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 29 April 1976

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 17 June 1976

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 17 Oct. 1976

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 28 Oct. 1976

----------. Letter to John and Tami Clark, Savannah GA, 16 Nov. 1976.

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 9 May 1977

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 6 July 1977

----------. Letter to Richard and Twila Bird, Ridgecrest CA, 7 Jan. 1977

----------. Letter to Debra (on mission), Hacienda Heights CA, 14 Jan. 1978

----------. Letter to Debra (on mission), Hacienda Heights CA, 13 March 1978

----------. Letter to Debra (on mission), Yucaipa CA, 12 Aug. 1978

----------. Letter to Debra (on mission), Glendale CA, 10 Nov. 1978

----------. Letter to Debra (on mission), Glendale CA, 19 Nov. 1978

---------- Letter to Debra (working for LaVel in Hutto, TX, 28 May 1981

---------- Letter to Debra (in Texas), 6 May 1982

---------- Letter to Duane (on mission), Farmington, MA, 5 Feb. 1982

----------. Mission Journals, 3 volumes bound in blue, metal-spiral-ring binders. In the front of each Thelma has written: "Activities, Private Missions, Welfare Services and Proselyting, Missionary Journal of Elder Versal J. Davis and Sister Thelma Hall Davis." (Dad kept his mission journals in his own separate volumes.) The journals contain Thelma's daily missionary activities and photographs. They cover the following time periods:

Vol. I (21 Oct. 1980-17 Feb. 1981)
Vol II. (18 Feb. 1981 - 26 July 1981)
Vol. III. (27 July 1981 - 10 Dec. 1981)

----------. Phone notes. In her later years Mom kept phenomenal, detailed notes whenever she had telephone conversations with family members. They accurately described complete conversations. She included these notes chronologically in the "Versal LaVel Davis Family History Albums."

---------- "Versal LaVel Davis family history." This history is contained in thirteen white, 3-inch, 3-ring binders filled with chronological letters written to and received from family and friends, photographs, news clippings, personal documents, and greeting cards. The heart of the history, however, are Thelma's unique "telephone notes," calendar notes, and personal journal entries. Her handwritten record ends on 4 March 1985, three weeks before her death of cancer on 29 March 1985. Versal included a postumous summary of the last few months of Thelma's illness, her death, and her funeral at the end of the last volume.

----------. "Ranch Income and Expenses in 1939." A small (4" X 6," blue, spiral note book containing a detailed listing of items purchased and various income sources during the second year of Versal and Thelma's marriage, while they lived on the Davis ranch north of St. Anthony, Idaho.

----------. "Rope." A 1968 essay written for a Utah State University English class, when Thelma attended there in pursuit of her bachelor of arts degree. The story is based on an event, which occurred during Versal and Thelma's ranch years (1937-1947).

----------. Untitled, handwritten, single-page document regarding Versal's [illegible] to "kid noise" and his perspective on having children. It is contained in a binder along with other personal papers authored by Thelma. The binder is in the possession of Twila Davis Bird, her daughter

Other Primary Sources

Affleck, Becce Alvord. [Bessie's daughter] Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 21 June 2011

Axtell, Tiffany Bird. [Versal's granddaughter] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 April 2011.

Birch, Jesse Dean. [Thelma's cousin, both are grandchildren of David and Nancy Birch] "Jesse Dean's Photos and Commentary." A 7-page document describing dozens of photos of the David and Nancy Birch family in St. Anthony during the 30s and 40s. His photo commentary appears in the Flashback titled, "Hay Time."

Bird, Twila Davis. [Versal's daughter] Letter to daughters Trisha and Raquelle at the BYU Jerusalem Center in Israel, 16 April 1989

---------- Letter to daughters Trisha and Raquelle at the BYU Jerusalem Center in Israel, 27 May 1989

Bowman, Merlie Ina Shosted. [Versal's niece, Leatha's daughter] Personal interview (Colleen Olsen Davis) during the VJ Davis family reunion in St. Anthony, 1 Aug. 1992. Taped and transcribed by Twila Davis Bird.

Burt, Cyril O. [illegible] A story of faith and courage, a biography of his mother, Ethel Burt. It includes the 1927 account of Ethel rescuing Cyril when he was four years old from a relentless gorge of ice in the Snake River as recorded in Dad's Flashback titled, "The Ice Gorge."

Burt, Cyril O. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home in St. Anthony, Idaho, 31 Aug. 2010.

Clark, Tamara Davis and John L. Clark. [Versal's daughter and son-in-law] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 8 Jan. 2011.

---------- Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 21 June 2011.

Davis, Charlotte Alice. "Affidavit." The Probate Court, Fremont County, St. Anthony, Idaho, 29 April 1947. Sworn, signed and notarized document setting forth inheritance rights for her Children and her youngest child, Versal L. Davis. It was witnessed and signed by [illegible] U.S. Marshal. Versal's description: "A real humorist, a fine storyteller, a natural talent to be used properly only in Heaven and I feel sure some [illegible] there."

---------- Alice Davis died four weeks after [illegible].

---------- Autobiography (untitled) of Charlotte Alice Davis, typed on five sheets of paper. Unsigned [but framed on the manuscript, the writing does not look like the early 40s, before Grandma went blind].

---------- History. Undated, typed, multi-page biographical sketch of Glen Cassity Davis.

---------- "My Ancestral and Family Heritage." Typed [illegible] dated 28 May 1986. Except for the final paragraph the history is a record of Charlotte's parents and great grandparents (the McDaniels, Deans & Dickens).

---------- Personal, handwritten [illegible] on the back of family group sheets for the "Town of Bernard, Maine." The notes give a detailed description of the events leading up to the husband Cecil's death in 1946.

Davis, Duane McDaniel. [Versal's son] Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 27 June 2011.

Davis, Ralph Dean. [Versal's nephew, Ruth's son] "Third Week Diary of Family History." Brief autobiography, 10 April 1983.

---------- Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home in Phoenix, Arizona, 28 June 2011.

Short, typed biography of Floyd E. Davis. (The history was begun by Floyd and finished by his wife, Carrie Crapo Davis, following his early death.)

----------. "Funeral Singing Log." (1949-1955) An list Floyd recording his singing engagements for funerals. Included were the name of the deceased individuals, whether he sang alone or with others, the title of each song, and the names of those he sang with (if any). Almost a hundred funerals are listed. (Floyd's son, Dean, says at least twice that many funerals were unrecorded in other years.)

Davis, Lauris Hall. [Versal's son] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 Jan. 2011.

Davis, Tawny Jetawn. [Versal's granddaughter] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 10 April 2011.

Davis, Versal Brent. [Versal's son] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 6 Sept. 2005, in which he recorded memories of his father, Versal L. Davis, as a volunteer fireman in the late 40s and early 50s.

----------. *Versal Brent Davis: From Beginning to [Not Quite] the End.* First 37, single-spaced, typed pages of the rough draft of Brent's not-yet-completed autobiography, "Years 0-17," drafted in 2011.

Docken, Deone Davis. [Versal's granddaughter] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 28 March 2011.

Fremont County, Idaho Warranty Deed #261847, dated 28 April 1947 transferring ownership of lots 11, 12, & 13 in block fifty-seven in St. Anthony, Idaho, from Carl P. Lenz and Evva Ellen Lenz to Versal L. Davis and Thelma H. Davis for the sum of $9,000.00.

Fremont County Probate Court affidavit, signed by Charlotte A. Davis on 29 April 1947 settling ranch ownership matters with Versal L. Davis. Signed and sworn before Probate Judge O. K. Meservy.

Leimer, Trisha Bird. [Versal's granddaughter] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 4 April 2011.

Loveland, Jay. [Versal's nephew, Vera's son] Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home on the Loveland Ranch north of St. Anthony, 10 July 2010, recorded and transcribed.

----------. Letter to Twila Bird, 28 March 2011.

Madsen, Kenna Caplinger. Personal interview (Twila Davis Bird) at her home in Kearns, Utah, 27 July 2010. The discussion centered on her father Warren Caplinger's relationship with his stepfather, Henry Olsen and the kindness of her grandmother, Merlie Davis Olsen.

Michaud, Sgt. David. Personal intrview (Versal and Thelma Davis and Twila Bird) at the Denver Police Station, Denver, Colorado, 18 Feb. 1982.

Nielsen, Karen Alvord. [Bessie's daughter] "Bessie Martha Glauser Alvord Davis" obituary, *The Herald Journal*, Logan, Utah, June 29, 2001, p. A10.

Nielsen, Karen Alvord. [Bessie's daughter] Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 22 June 2011.

Nelson, Debra Davis. [Versal's daughter] "My Personal Record," included in Debra's *Book of Remembrance*, 1966.

----------. Deb's original "Coalie" drawing was included as a small sketch in the margins on page 6 of a letter her mother, Thelma Hall Davis, wrote to family members, 6 March 1974. She was 18.

Ostermiller, Ada. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at Ada's St. Anthony home (507 West 1st North), 10 July 2010. Ada's home was used as the meetinghouse for the St. Anthony Third Ward during the years Versal and Thelma lived in town (1947-1952).

----------. telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 02 Dec. 2010. Main topic: St. Anthony's "Vet units," which our family lived in briefly in 1952.

Ostermiller, Alice Davis. [Versal's niece, daughter of his brother, Floyd] Email to Twila Davis Bird dated 14 July 2010 regarding the disposition of the Davis farm at the time of Alice's death in 1947. Alice's recollections were that before Gould died (in 1942), he told Versal he would inherit the farm in total if he took care of Alice for the rest of her life.

Peterson, Vera Cleova Loveland. [Versal's cousin] "Memories of Grandfather John Gould Davis," 1987. Topics include Gould's kindness, church work, assistance in helping Cleova get a job, difficulty in getting to and from the "Upper Farm," and memories of his horse named "Topsy."

----------. "Memories of Grandmother Charlotte Alice McDaniel Davis." 1987. In 2005, Cleova's son, Verl Peterson, retyped the original document, which was among Cleova's genealogy documents. The resulting typed copy is 1½ pages in length. Topics include accounts of her grandmother Davis' love of cooking and entertaining, her farm and household duties, grandchildren playing on her front lawn, her homemade socks, her enjoyment of people, her husband's death, and her resulting physical and mental decline.

Ritchie, Estelle Davis. [Versal's granddaughter] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 30 March 2011.

Sheldon, Michelle Davis. [Versal's granddaughter] Email to Twila Davis Bird, 25 March 2011

Singleton, Blaine [Versal's childhood friend and husband of Merlie Ina Shosted, Versal's niece] Personal interview (Twila Bird) during a VI Davis family reunion bus tour of sites in and around St. Anthony, Idaho, 1 Aug. 1992. Taped and transcribed.

Singleton, Merlie Ina Shosted Bowman [Versal's niece, the daughter of Leatha Davis Shosted . Personal interview (Colleen Davis and Bessie Alvord Davis) at St. Anthony's Keefer Park, 1 Aug. 1992, taped and transcribed.

Spence, Corrette Davis. [Versal's granddaughter] Telephone interview with notes (Twila Bird), 23 June 2011

"State of Idaho Teacher's Contract." (29 April 1944) The legal document between Independent School District No. 2 in Fremont County and Thelma Davis hiring her to teach for the 1944-45 school year for a monthly salary of $107.00. Thelma taught second grade at Lincoln Elementary School in St. Anthony.

"State of Idaho Teacher's Contract." (13 April 1945) The legal document between Independent School District No. 2 in Fremont County and Thelma Davis hiring her to teach for the 1945-46 school year for a monthly salary of $109.00. (Thelma broke this contract to accept a much more lucrative pay in the neighboring Twin Groves School District.)

"State of Idaho Teacher's Contract." (27 August 1945) The legal document between Twin Groves School District No. 31 in Fremont County and Thelma Davis hiring her to teach for the 1945-46 school year for a monthly salary of $170.00.

"State of Idaho Teacher's Contract." (3 Sept. 1946) The legal document between Twin Groves School District No. 31 in Fremont County and Thelma Davis hiring her to teach for the 1946-47 school year for a monthly salary of $170.00.

Sutton, Ken. [St. Anthony fireman for 47 years.] Personal interview (Twila Bird) at the St. Anthony Fire Station, 3 Oct. 2005. Sutton described how the volunteer firefighter system worked in the late 40s and early 50s.

"Teacher's Contract." (13 Aug. 1951) The legal document between Fremont County Joint School District No. A-215 and Thelma Davis hiring her to teach for the 1951-52 school year for a monthly salary of $208.33. Thelma taught at one of the St. Anthony schools.

Warranty Deed #261847. Fremont County, Idaho, 28 April 1947. The legal document transferring title of the home and three lots at 347 West Main Street in St Anthony, Idaho, to Versal and Thelma Davis for the purchase price of $9000.00.

Wright, Vard. Personal interview (Twila Bird) at his home two miles south of St. Anthony, Idaho, 11 July 2010.

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Flashbacks & Topics

VLD
Cs

One — Boyhood Memories

6 Dad's Pioneering Spirit
7 Tribute to Mother and Dad
8 My Parents and Desperados
9 Does Color Make a Difference?
10 My Life on the Ranch: A Capsule Account
14 A Go-Devil
14 The Quilting Tradition
14 Ignorance is Bliss
15 Custom Made
16 Why Me?
16 Long Johns
17 Near Tragedy
18 Our First Radio and Telephone
18 Coal Oil Lamps
19 Vinegar Fizz
19 My Four-tined Spear
20 The Ice Gorge
24 Oh, Well, Who Knows?
25 Helter Skelter
26 Our Private Sheep Herd
27 Indians!
28 Wolf at Midnight
29 Free Protein
30 Hay Time
32 Dynamite!
33 Swimmin'
36 Empathy for Horses
37 Ole Peter
38 School Daze
40 After the Dogs
41 The Southsiders
43 A Peanut Bust
44 No Sympathy
45 My Special Teacher

Two — Me N' Dutch

48 The Bull Fight
49 Our Bulging Pockets
50 Chickening Out
50 Our Mosquito Repellent
51 No Tires? So What!
51 I'm Branded
53 Only Ten Feet Away
56 Being a Boy
57 While Others Danced
58 All for $1.99 or Less
58 I'm Sorry, Sir
60 It Happened in Prohibition Times
61 Peaceful Sleep
61 What Was a Flipper?
62 My Private Chisler Herd
62 From the Lowly Cattail
63 Wild West Style
64 What Kids Won't Do!
65 Lassoing a Pig!
66 Suckers Anyone?
66 All for Supper

Three — As a Teen & Young Adult

70 My Aaronic Priesthood Years and Before
71 I Hope the Lord Remembers
71 Dad and Me
74 Spring Cleaning of the Canal
74 Whose Was It?
76 Branding Time
77 Dad's Registered Brand
78 Harvest Time
79 Nose Bags for Horses
80 Breaking Draft Horses
80 Our Private Rodeos
82 My Own Motorcycle
82 Radios Back Then
82 Umm — Free Ice Cream
84 Fritz, My Obedient Dog
84 Come On In, Son
86 Our Courtship

Four — Early Ranch Life

94 Only When It Rained

95 Milk and Ice Cream Back Then
96 The Ground Was Alive With Them
97 Thousands at a Time
98 Linoleum
99 Were They Worth It?
99 LaVel's Birth
101 Careful, Go Slow
102 A New Innovation
102 Forty Years of Regret
104 My Mistake
104 Dogs I've Owned
106 Yellowstone Then
108 What Bait Are You Using?
108 Rats, Rats, Rats
109 The Idaho Potato
110 Saved by a Bolt
112 Some of the Best
113 Thelma Enjoyed It, Anyway
114 Rope

Five — The War Years

118 December 7, 1941
121 A Tribute to Thelma
122 Serving at Home
124 Pint-Sized Efforts of War
125 World War II Restrictions
126 Miracle Baby
128 Farm Record Book
130 One Inch Deeper
131 I Didn't Even Miss It
134 When the Sirens Blared
135 Tragedy at Island Park Reservoir
138 Just Let Me Rest, Jim
139 By Our Smell
140 Leaving the Ranch
141 How Did It Get There?
142 Then and Now

Six — St. Anthony Years

148 Alice Davis' Death
149 The VLD St. Anthony Home
150 Repairs Were Free
151 Near Tragedy
152 Volunteer Fireman
154 Lock Jaw
154 Singing
156 St. Anthony Third Ward
157 Church Involvement
157 A Lesson Learned the Hard Way
158 I'm Sorry, I Tried
159 Emergency Treatment
160 Was It Worth It?
160 Elk Hunting In Idaho
162 Guns and Reloading
163 Sand Dunes and Ice Caves
164 Tamara's Birth
166 A Lunch Box Surprise
169 St. Anthony Landmarks in Early 1950s

Seven — Early Logan Years

172 Lauris' Birth
173 Dance Instructors
174 My Scouting Years
175 It Was Cold
176 Down The Snake
177 My "Rescue"
178 Debra's Birth
182 Ace Mill
183 It Was A Blast
184 Sorry About That, Dave
186 Fishing For Seagulls
187 Community Involvement
188 Bears and Newlyweds
189 He Was Sociable
190 Dad and Christmas
193 Duane's Birth
194 None, But I Got Eight
195 It Was Convenient
196 Silver Anniversary
197 Hunting
199 Two Mission-Matched Weddings
200 Financial Worries
202 Our Trees

Eight — Alaska

207 The Great Outdoors
209 Excursions Summary
1966 Caribou and Moose Hunting
210 1966 Trip Log
213 Run In Grand Prairie
1974 Floating the Yukon
216 Anticipation
216 Points of Interest Northward
218 On the River
218 Moose in Camp
220 They Came Down Instead
222 Points of Interest Heading Home
1984 Casual Sightseeing
224 Changes Along the Alcan Highway
226 The Weather
226 Compatible Companions
227 Animal Sightings
228 Leaving Alaska Behind
229 Next Adventure: Mom's Battle With Cancer

Nine — Mid-Life in Logan

231 Photography
232 Genealogy
233 Two More Romances
234 Six Stories Down
236 Lauris & Dorothy
236 Deep Sea Fishing with Warren
239 Only Eight Fish
239 Mom's Fishing Stories
240 Continuing Education
241 Dad's Work Worries
242 The Traveling Love Letter
243 Alaska 1974
243 Deb's Surgeries
244 Our Davis Tumors
246 The Water Treatment
246 Corette Moves In
247 Deb's Mission
248 Logan First Ward
249 Bishop's Counselor
250 Sense of Humor
252 Dad Begins Journaling
253 Gearing Down
254 Semi-Retirement
255 Economy Woes
258 Dad and Coalie
260 1979 Canada Trip
262 Baptizing the Van
264 Great Grandpa
264 Temple Service
266 Grandma Hall
267 A Tribute to Thelma's Parents
268 Family Challenges
268 Duane's Mission
269 A Lesson in Pride

Ten — Our Mission

274 The Call
274 In a Sense, He Did Go
275 A Milestone
276 Mission Training Center
277 Old Fritz and the Howard Girl
278 First Impressions
279 The Maricopa Indian Branch
279 One Active Member
280 The Redbird's Dogs
281 Thanksgiving
281 Golden Plates
282 I'm Apache!
283 The Redbird Pit
284 Suspicious Indians
285 Sacrament Bread Thieves
286 As the Sun's First Rays
290 Why the Axe?
291 Handyman
292 The Welfare Services Approach
274 First Investigators
277 Indian Superstition
278 Tarantulas!!
278 Medicine Men
279 Joyous Baptisms
280 Gaining Acceptance
280 Bald Eagle & Cotton Top
281 String of Burglaries!
306 Speaking Up
307 Making a Difference
307 A New Focus
311 Hitting Bottom
312 The Maricopa Twig
313 Confronting the Gang
314 Living in a Furnace
315 Racial Tensions
316 Initial Health Problems
317 Chicken Scratch
318 Fixing Oldsters' Homes
319 Cancer & Mission Release
320 Tearful Goodbyes
321 Heading Home
321 Post-Mission Notes

Eleven — Our Older Years

323 Prostate Cancer
324 Words Cannot Express
325 Dad's Sentimental Side
326 An Apparent Talent
327 A Tragic Death
328 My Private Hair Stylist
329 The $122.00 Trout
330 Fisherman's Luck
331 Mom's Sequel
332 Heart Attack!
334 In Retrospect
334 The Last Two Wed
335 Empty Nesters
336 New Plans Replace Old Ones
336 Learning Patience
339 Concern For Deb
340 Fish #18
341 Back Surgery
342 The Table Turns
343 Uterine Cancer
343 The Post-Op Report
344 Facing Mortality
345 Alaska Again — Almost!
346 Does Sea Sickness Help?
346 Ocean Fishing
347 LaVel's Heart Attack
348 Therapy Trip
349 A New "Normal"
350 At Odds Over Alaska

352 Mom's Final Surgery
352 President Hinckley's Visit
352 At Home With Mom
354 Mom's Decline
354 Malignancy in Dad's Hip
355 Compassionate Care
355 Mom's Passing
356 Thelma Is Gone
358 Special, To My Beloved

Twelve — Bessie and Me

361 Bessie & Dad
362 That Scalawag Stallion
364 Bessie Martha Glauser
365 Was It Meant To Be?
366 A Fine Woman
367 Bone Cancer Spreads
367 The Botched Alaska Trip
369 Seasonal Preparations
370 Bathtub Blues
371 She Didn't Quite Make It!
372 Family Acceptance
372 A Lesson Learned
373 Prostate Surgery
373 My Apostasy — Almost
373 Seven or Seventy?
375 The Glue Was Gone
375 Fishing Therapy Fades
376 Now, My Inability
377 Life Winds Down
378 Excursions
379 Returning to His Roots
380 Two Silly Dreams
381 The Rude Red Rooster
382 Mistaken Identity
383 Staying Involved
383 Stroganoff Piano Concerto in C Flat
384 Dad's Health Worsens
385 4 Crises in 2 Months
386 Slipping Away
388 Dad's Passing

Thirteen — Reflections

394 To All of Ours
397 Church & Final Attitudes
398 Mom's Ability to Adapt
398 Compromise
400 Conflict Resolution
404 A Matter of Finances
406 Reunion Address, 1988
410 From the Mountain Top

Artwork

Debra Davis Nelson:

24 "Oh, Well, Who Knows?"
28 "Wolf at Midnight"
57 "While Others Danced"
60 "It Happened in Prohibition Times"
65 "Lassoing a Pig"
77 "Then, all H_ll Broke Loose"
194 "None, But I Got Eight"
219 "Moose in Camp"
220 "They Came Down Instead of Up"
221 "Coalie Overboard on the Yukon"
223 "Coalie and the Malamute"
259 "Coalie"
261 "Deer on a Moonlit Night" (acrylic on velvet)
359 "Thelma Hall Davis" (acrylic portrait)
370 "Bathtub Blues"
412 "Versal LaVel Davis" (pencil drawing)

Twila Davis Bird:

206 "Versal Overlooking the Nanana River" (acrylic painting)

Lyle Davis:

263 "Grandpa's Van" (watercolor painting)

General Index

VLD

Photos, artwork, charts, and graphics are listed in **bold type**.

A

Aaronic Priesthood. Versal receives at age 12, 70.

Ace Mill and Construction. news article about, **182**; Versal begins working for, 182; photo of crane, **182**; photo of Ace Mill Employees, **185**; shop employees fish for seagulls in Yellowstone, 186; photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone, **186**; quick reflexes avert disaster when Versal rides crane's "headache knob," 234; news photo showing Reed Johnson operating crane, **235**; photo showing crane being used to repair Logan Temple, **235**; good natured banter and pranks among shop employees described, 236; shop buddies join in successful Blacksmith Reservoir fishing trip, 237; shop employees have casting contest during successful fishing trip, 238; Thelma expresses respect for employees, 240; Versal's mill responsibilities evolve, 241; Versal's arthritis begins interferring with ability to work on cement surfaces, 253; 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**; Versal begins semi-retirement, 254; calls Versal to trouble-shoot, 254; Versal takes tools home before serving mission, 275; Ev still calls Versal for work following retirement and heart attack, 338; Versal continues to work sporadically, 338; photo of demolished paint room at Ace Mill, **338**; Ace Mill deep sea fishing trips discussed, 346; Versal finally quits, 377; mill employees help Versal pour cement for new driveway, 466.

Adams, Ansel (photographer). photo of Snake River and Tetons, **73**.

Affleck, Angela. is shown in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Affleck, Becky Alvord. in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**; in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Affleck, Benjamin. in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Affleck, Carami. in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Affleck, Dallan. in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Affleck, Emily. in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Affleck, Ferrin. in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Affleck, Lynn. in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Alaska. Versal's fascination with, 207; acrylic painting of Versal overlooking Nanana River, **206**; map showing excursions to, **208**, summary of excursions to, 209; 1966 Caribou and moose hunting trip outlined, 210-215; photos of, **210, 211, 213 & 215**; Deb's drawings of 1974 trip to, **219, 220, 221 & 223;** 1984 Alaska sightseeing trip outlined, 224-229; 1984 Alaska photos, **224-229**; animal sightings in, 227; expresses wishes to go to Alaska alone if Bessie refuses to go, 466, a description of the conflict between Versal and an Alaska traveling companion and the results for Bessie, 466; Versal writes about Banff National Park, 467; tells of his experience watching a beaver in a shallow pool near the Nenana River, 467;

Alcan Highway. changes in, 224; photo of, **224**.

Allen, Cethil. helps the Burts during 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 20-23.

Alvord, Becky (see Affleck, Becky Alvord)

Alvord, Bessie Glauser. (see Davis, Bessie Glauser Alvord).

Alvord, Gloria. absent in Alvord family photo, **365;** in photo, **382**.

Alvord, Jennifer. in photo, **382**; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**.

Alvord, Sid. abesent in Alvord family photo, **365;** in photo, **382**; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**.

Anderson, Blake. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Anderson, Gene. boarded at same boarding house as Thelma in Chapin, 88.

Anderson, Lila. in Duane and Melanie's wedding photo, **335**.

Anderson, Melanie. (see Davis, Melanie Anderson)

Anderson, Neil. in Duane and Melanie's wedding photo, 335.

Arizona Tempe Mission. map showing location of, **278**; first impressions of, 278; statistics regarding, 278.

Atwater Kent radio. description and photo of, **18**.

Austin, Kathy. in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**.

Austin, Glenna. in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**.

Axtell, Emily. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Axtell, Levi. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Axtell, Mikayla. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Axtell, Russell (Tripp). listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Axtell, Sydney. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

B

ballpoint pen. innovation in the 1940s, 102; photo of, 102.

Ballard, Corey. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Ballard, Casey LaVel. in 1979 five generation photo, **264**; listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467.

Ballard, Dustin. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Ballard, Gordon C. (Gordy). father of Versal and Thelma's first great grandson, 264 Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467.

barn. construction of, 94; visible in photo, **94**.

Barney, Ed. Versal mistakenly kills his good cattle dog, 104.

Bartlett, Joyce. calls to notify Versal and Thelma of 3rd burglary to their trailer, 305; in photo of group at Mesa Temple, **342**.

Bartlet, Lester. urges Davises to consider second mission in Maricopa Indian Branch, 321 & 342; calls to tell of McMillan family's plan to be sealed in temple, 342; in photo of group at Mesa Temple, **342**.

Bassett, Myrthen. sang for years with Versal in a St. Anthony male quartet, 326 & 436.

bears. Versal hits one with water bag, 188; fishes with one beside him in river, 189; photo of Yellowstone bear, **188**.

Beckstead, Lucretia Davis. in 1919 Gould Davis family portrait, **11**.

Berntson, Bob. helped Duane remodel tree house, 203.

Birch, David. photo of on "go-devil," **14**; photo on haystack, **30**; home shown on map, **168-169**.

Birch, Earl. present during 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 21.

Birch, Eileen. in 1942 photo on banks of Snake River, **122**.

Birch, Elva. good friend of Thelma's in college, 87.

Birch, Jess. photo on hay wagon, **30**; in 1942 photo on bank of Snake River, **122**.

Birch, Reed. in 1942 photo on river bank, **122**.

Birch, Reuben. present during 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 21.

Bird, Heather. in leg wrestling photo, **250**; in photo with grandpa Davis and cousin Christine, **339**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; friend's father mistakes Bessie for another Davis woman who is expecting a baby, 362; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Raquelle. in photo on Tiffany's blessing day, **242**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in spanking machine photo, **251**; photo drinking buttermilk, **251**; accompanies Twila to Logan following Thelma's final cancer surgery, 352; Twila's letters to her in Israel keep her apprised of Versal's health emergencies, 385; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Richard E. marries Twila Davis, 233; engagement photo, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; Versal and Thelma plan 1982 trip to visit, 328; in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Sadie. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Talmage. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Tanner. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Tiffany. Grandma Davis comes to California for birth of, 242; photo of on blessing day, **242**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; recalls her Grandpa Davis' mischievious nature, 250; in spanking machine photo, **251**; accompanies Twila to Logan following Thelma's final cancer surgery, 352; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Travis. in spanking machine photo, **251**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo of Versal teaching Lyle and him how to cook fish, **376**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**

Bird, Trisha. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in photo on Tiffany's blessing day, **242**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; remembers Grandma Davis' big, squishy hugs and Grandpa's tickling bouts, 250; remembers being bribed to drink buttermilk, 250; in lake dunking photo, **250**; photo drinking buttermilk **251**; stays in Colorado to care for Richard while family travels to Logan following Thelma's final cancer surgery, 352; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo with Versal and Damaris and Vernon Clark in St. Anthony, **379**; accompanies Versal and Bessie on trip to St. Anthony where her grandpa shows her around, 379; Twila's letters to her in Israel keep her apprised of Versal's health emergencies, 385; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Bird, Twila Davis. tells of learning how to fish, viii; 1958 photo in Yellowstone Park, **viii**; 1962 photo fishing, **ix**; Versal tells of her birth, 158; baby photo of, **158**; photo shows he observing brothers swimming in Snake River, **166**; in 1951 photo with parents, **167**; in mutual dance practice photo, **173**; fascinated by baby Debra, 180; in photos of 1958 Yellowstone trip, **188 & 189**; tells of childhood Christmas memories, 190; in 1958 family Christmas photos, **190 & 191**; in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; is insensitive to family finances in junior high school, 200; in backyard elm tree photo, **202**; enjoyed tree house with friends, 202; marries Richard Bird, 233; engagement photo, **233**; in photo on Tiffany's blessing day, **242**; becomes a Davis tumor bloomer, 244; in 1975 Davis family photos, 244 & **245**; recalls clipping Versal's toenails as condition for first date, 251; photo of clipping toenails, **251**; recalls parent's emphasis on gardening and food storage, 256; develops friendship with cousin, Carol Davis Elvin, 327; photo of Carol, **327**; photo of Carol's graveside service attendees, **327**; Versal and Thelma plan 1982 trip to visit, 328; records observations following Thelma's final cancer surgery, 352; records Thelma's decline, 355; describes Thelma's passing, 355; participated in a family fast for Thelma's release 355; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo of Davis children and spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; sets neighbor straight on Bessies pregnancy status, 362; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; letters to daughters keep them apprised of Versal's health emergencies 385; travels to Utah to help care for Versal, 387; helps drive Versal into mountains one last time, 387; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**, 1991 photo of Bessie and Twila, **391**, in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**; Twila's tumor surgery history outlined, **460**

Bird, Whitaker. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Bishop, Kent. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**

Bishop, Dr. Michael T. helps Duane administer to Versal following heart attack, 333

Blackburn, Cheryll. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Blaser, JoAnn. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**

Bonneville County Courthouse. photo of, **89** location of Versal and Thelma's wedding, 89

Bowman, Merlie Shosted. in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; writes of being afraid of Versal, 55; tells of her grandmother Alice Davis' "playing favorites" among the grandchildren, 463

Bridge Street Versal is almost run over on, 21, 1993 photo of, 17, Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle located on, 70, photo of, 153

Broadbent, D. J. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**, Klondike camping with Brent, 175

Brownie one of Dad's favorite dogs described, 105, photo, **105**, in 1943 family photo, **116**

Bryner, Dr. examines Dad's fractured arm, 88

Bullen, Pres. Reed [illegible] possibly calls Versal to work at Ricks, 396,

Burt, Betty. photo of, **21**

Burt, Cyril O. tells story of his rescue during ice gorge tragedy of 1927, photos of, **21 & 23**

Burt, David. Burt family's infant son killed during 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 20-23.

Burt, Ethel. rescues son from ice gorge, 20-23; photo of, **20**

Burt, Gene. photo of, **21**

Burt, Will. rescues son from ice gorge, 20-23; photo, **20**

C

Cameron, Winona [illegible] arrives late to branch conference, 312

Canada. 1974 trip outlined, 216-217 & 223; 1974 photo of Versal & Thelma at border, **217**; Alcan Highway described, 224; campsite photo in British Columbia, **226**; 1979 trip described, 280

Caplinger, Fred marries Melva [illegible], 1911 photo of, **47**; in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**

Caplinger, Warren [illegible] played with Versal when young, 33; in 1919 family portrait, **11**; had outhouse contest with Versal, 34; swims in Last Chance Canal, 34; may showing location of swimming holes, **34**; 1929 8th grade graduate, **43**; known as "Dutch", 47; uncle reprises wrestling with Versal, 47; 1934 photo at Keefer Park with Versal, **46**; teenage photo of, **48**; story of being chased by bull, 48; gorges on pears, 49; climbs lava flats with Versal, 50; makes homemade parachute repellent, 51; slides down hill inside tire, 51; 1939 photo of, **51**; ice skates with Versal on Last Chance canal, 51; ignites aftermath cap with Versal, 53; shows Versal how to pick locks at Venice Dance Hall, 56; deserts Versal while tending horse at Venice Dance Hall, 57; threatens to shoot horse at Venice Dance Hall, 57; has fun with homemade skis, 58; goes on chickens with Versal and Orville Loveland, 58; gives fermented seeds to chickens, 60; drawing of drunk chickens, **60**; hypnotizes chickens, 61; traps and brands chislers, 62; makes grease from cattails, 62; 1939 photo of, 63; shoots rabbits and chislers with .22 rifles, 63; uses cow pat BB to flavor roasted deer, 64; lassos pig, 64; drawing of lassoed pig, 65; catches suckers in Last Chance Canal, 66; catches 90 "red spooks" on overnight camping/fishing trip, 67; photo of "red spooks," 67; 1946 photo with string of fish, 67; collects fare offerings, 70; assists in branding Sue and Bally, 75; drawing of branding branded horse, 77; 1956 photo in wagon pulled by Buck and Sue, 78; assists in breaking draft horse, 80; in 1941 extended Davis family photo, 117; one of Versal's trappers from hunting competitions, 160; Mary gives Versal a locket on last family visit, 164; and Dutch go swimming against her orders, 416-418; playing with Dutch in old Model T Ford, 419; playing with magnet near Dutch, 421; conception of bird head, scissors, pen, box, 421; playing in water hose by street, 422; playing with Dutch at gate post house, 422; playing "snowmen and buttons" with Dutch, 423; romances with Dutch, 424; overnight campground romps with Dutch, 425; trapping animals with Dutch, 425; sliding down snow-covered [illegible] with Dutch, 426

Card, Howard [illegible] 88; doesn't show up for home [illegible], 308; begins [illegible] again, 309; [illegible] pass, 310; [illegible], 310

Card, Mabinda [illegible] 33; [illegible] 33; [illegible] 33;

caribou [illegible] outlined, 210-215; photo of Reidar Holman dressing cari- [illegible] 211, 1984 [illegible] at 227; photo of, 227

Carter, Lester. introduces Versal to first elk hunt, 148; Versal remembers his first hunt with, 436.

Carter, Ray. postal clerk in St. Anthony who introduced Versal to his first ballpoint pen, 102.

Central School. description of, 38; photo of, **38**; describes rivalry between "southsiders" and "north siders," 41; map showing north and south division in St. Anthony, **41**; shown on map, **168-169**

Channel, the. drawing showing location of, **34**; photo of Davis family members swimming in, **35**; description of swimming there, 35.

chickens. Versal and friends have "chickoree," 59; Dutch and Versal give fermented mash to, 60; drawing of drunk chickens, **60**; Versal hypnotizes, 61; Versal plays with Dutch in setty hen boxes, 422; chicken cookouts with Dutch, 424.

"Chicken Scratch" (a type of Maricopa Indian music). described by Thelma, 317; dances at community Chicken Scratch party, 317; their dancing has wide impact on Indians, 317.

chislers (ground squirrels). description of, 62; Versal and Dutch trap and brand, 62; describes skill with a .22 rifle in shooting rabbits and chislers, 63.

Christmas. memories of Davis traditions, 190-191; 1958 photos of, **190 & 191**; spent at Grandma Halls in 1957, 193.

Clark, Andrew. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Clark, Damaris Olsen. 1924 photo of, **5**; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; cares for her grandmother Alice Davis before her death, 148; in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, **327**; photo with Versal & Trisha, and husband, Vernon, **379**;

Clark, Elina. in 1942 photo on banks of Snake River, **122**.

Clark, Jared LaVel. birth of, 223, in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in spanking machine photo, **251**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photos at cemetery, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467.

Clark, John Lorin. marries Tamara Davis, 233; engagement photo, **233**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; works at Ace Mill, 236; remembers good natured banter and pranks among mill employees, 236; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; Versal and Thelma visit in Georgia, 253; gets job at Gossners and family moves in with Davises, 273; assists in painting outside of Davis' Logan home, 347; in photo of Davis children and spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Clark, Myrdean. in 1934 photo on Twin Groves Project, 35; in 1974 July 4th photo with friends, **86**.

Clark, Shalyce. in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in [illegible] photo, 251; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467.

Clark, Tamara Davis. birth of, 164; photo with mother and Grandma Hall, **164**, Thelma's note tells about inviting her into family, **164**; 1952 photo of, **165**; 1951 photo with parents, **167**; fascinated by baby Debra, 180; in photos of 1958 Yellowstone trip, **188 & 189**; in 1958 family Christmas photos, **190 & 191**; in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; in backyard elm tree, **202**; in photo of tree house, **203**; marries John Lorin Clark, 233; engagement photo, **233**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photos, **244 & 245**; Versal and Thelma visit in Georgia, 253; John gets job at Gossners and family moves in with Davises, 273; takes turns staying with Versal in hospital following his first heart attack, 333; drives to Texas with parents for LaVel's open heart surgry, 348; transcribes Thelma's recorded history of Logan First Ward Relief Society, 353 & 355; participates in family fast for Thelma's release, 355; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo of Davis children and spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; helps care for Versal after another heart attack, 386; photo of Versal in hospital bed, **386**; traveles to Logan to help care for Versal during his last few months, 387; was with Versal when he died, 388; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Clark, Tami Dee. in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in spanking machine photo, **251**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467.

Clark, Vernon. in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, 327; in photo with Versal & Trisha, and wife, Damaris, **379**.

coal oil lamps. description of, 18.

Coalie. included in 1974 Yukon River trip, 216-223; 1974 Alaska photos of, **216-223**; Deb's drawings of Coalie in Alaska, **216-223**; chases moose, 219; falls in river, 221; intimidated by Malamute, 223; in photo with Deb, **243**; Deb and Versal's affection for, 258; comes into heat and its relationship to Versal's Sunday School teaching, 258; has 7 pups, 258; is spayed, 258; Versal's attentiveness when she was dying of cancer, 258; photo of Versal's journal entry at her death, **258**; photo of, **257**.

cows. Versal's and Gould's brands, 76; photo of, **76**; construction of cow barn, 94; Versal describes dairy oprations on ranch, 95; cow barn visible in photo, **96**; milked by Alice Davis on ranch, 100; terrorized by stray dogs, 104; two humorous accounts of Versal trying to rope a steer, 113-155; drawing of roping account, **114**; 1982 photo of cow barn, **143**.

Crapo, Fred. in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**;

Craw, Bert. Ace Mill employee helps Versal during welding accident, 194; values Versal's skills and asks for help, 254.

D

Daines, Dr. Merrill. gives Versal pre-mission phyical but recommends waiting to see if heart is OK, 332; attends Versal following his heart attack, 333; advises against back surgery following heart attack, 337; sees Versal as he has more heart pain, 377; expecting Versal to die "any minute" but Versal pulls through, 396.

dairy operations on ranch. Versal describes, 95.

Davenport, Charles. in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**

Davis, Aiden. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Davis, Allan. goes on deep sea fishing trip, 346; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; visits Versal when he is dying in Logan Valley Nursing Center, 387; in photos at cemetery, **388-389**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Alice. in 1946 photo with hre father, Floyd, and grandmother, Alice, **140**.

Davis, Allison. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Ashley Jo. in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Austin. in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Bessie Glauser Alvord. in Alaska excursions summary, 209; photo on wedding day, **360**; Versal shows interest in, 362; relationship blossoms quickly, 362; marries Versal on her 71st birthday, 362; photo with Versal outside of temple on wedding day, **362**; Bird's neighbor mistakes Bessie for another Davis woman who is expecting a baby, 362; in photo with Versal on her back porch, **363**; is of Swiss heritage, 364; born to Glauser family, 364; marries Paul Allen Alvord, 364; has five children, 364; as widow raises children alone, 364; Versal recognizes her inner strength, 364; in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**; **365**; Versal summarizes courtship with, 365; Versal pays tribute as "a fine woman," 366; travels with Versal on 4,000 mile Amtrak trip to see family members around country, 365; photo with Versal by Amtrak train, **367**; begins botched Alaska trip with Versal and another couple, 367; after Versal returns to Utah prematurely, travels on to see Alaska, 368; flies from Anchorage back to Utah, 368; photo of, **369**; photo of the Alvord Logan home, **369**; is aghast when Versal uses toilet cleaning rag to clean face in tub, 370; drawing of Versal in tub, **370**; photos of Versal and Bessie playing "Chubby Bunnies," **371**; account of Versal doctoring her cereal with salt, 371; her family accepts Versal, 372; assumes many home chores Versal can't do because of his health, 376; in photo with Versal relaxing on bed, **377**; summary of excursions and road trips during four years of marriage, 378; in photo of Versal wearing Micky Mouse ears, **378**; thinks Versal is having heart attack in night but he's actually laughing about his silly dreams, 380; is awakened at Bernice's house by rooster, 381; in photo with Versal and Bernice, **381**; mistakes foot balm for sore throat medicine, 382; serves as vice-president of local chapter of American Association of Retired Persons, 383; shares love of singing and playing harmonica, 383; cares for Versal diligently during his last few months, 386; photo with Deb and Versal in Logan Canyon, **387**; was with Versal when he died, 388; in photos at cemetery, **388-389**; second widowhood same length as first one, 19 years, 391; died 27 June 2008, 391; 1991 photo of Bessie and Twila, **391**; marriage to

Versal, 447; companionship with Versal, 448; trip to Mexico, 449; Versal expresses tribute to Bessie, 450; Versal expresses wishes to go to Alaska alone if Bessie refuses to go with him, 466; a description of the conflict between Versal and an Alaska traveling companion and the results for Bessie, 466; Thelma records journal entry indicating Bessie was her visiting teacher shortly before here death, 470;

Davis, Brian J. in 1945 family photo, **116**; birth of described, 126 (also see 463); photo as infant with Thelma, **126**; in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**; with parents at time of Island Park Reservoir accidental drowning, 135; in 1947 V. L. Davis tenth anniversary family photo, **147**; learns how to swim in Snake River, 166; in newspaper photo showing swimming lessons in river, **166**; 1948 photo of, **167**; participation in Versal's Easter Sunday rescue in Blacksmith Fork Canyon, 177-179; news photos of rescue, **179**; in photos of 1958 Yellowstone trip, **188 & 189**; in 1958 family Christmas photos, **190 & 191**; in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; rabbit hunts in Snowville, 197; marries Jackie Millward, 199; wedding photo, **199**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1974 photo of Versal with five sons, **238**; becomes a Davis tumor bloomer, 244; in 1975 Davis family photos, **244 & 245**; Versal and Thelma visit at home in Washington on way to Canada, 260; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; goes crabbing — procedure described, 260; goes deep sea fishing with other Davis family members, 337; participates in family prayer and priesthood blessing for Thelma, 343; assists in painting outside of Davis' Logan home, 347; all five Davis sons converge in Logan during February 1985 to visit Thelma, 354; photo of Versal with five sons, **354**; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; family stays at Bessie's home for a few days, 372; in photos at cemetery, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**; Brian's tumor surgery history outlined, **460**; extensive quote from letter written by Thelma giving more details of Brian's birth, 463.

Davis, Carrie. photo of, **25**; made rope manes for Floyd's rocking horses, 25; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**; writes of Floyd's musical abilities, 15.

Davis, Catherine. photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Charles Augustus. was a polygamist, 6.

Davis, Charlotte Alice McDaniel. 1913 photo of, **3**; names Versal, 3; had pioneering spirit, 7; religion motivating force of, 7; 1942 Golden Wedding portrait of, **7**; story of desperado, 8; photo of, **8**; throws Gould's guns in canal, 8; in 1919 family portrait, **11**; quilted all bed covers for family, 14; sews Versal into his long johns, 16; enjoys listening to Atwater Kent radio, 18; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**, asks boys about igniting dynamite cap, 53; in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; questions Versal about lassoed pig, 64; waits up for Versal at 4:00 a.m. following date with Thelma, 86; 1927 portrait of, 87, shares the ranch house with Versal & Thelma, 93; "mothered" LaVel, 93; 1939 photo with LaVel, **93**, milked the cows on the ranch, 100; Thelma writes of her reputation as a midwife in St. Anthony, Twin Groves and Chester (with hundreds of deliveries to her credit), 100, her help during LaVel's birth, 101, in 1941 extended Davis family photo, **117**; Golden Anniversary described, 119; Golden Anniversary cake photo, **119**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**; her care for Gould at time of death 120; photo sitting on own tombstone, **120**; Versal pays tribute to her help after Gould's death, 121; 1946 photo with son, Floyd, and granddaughter Alice 140 divides estate before death, 147, physical and mental deterioration before death, 148, care given by family members and paid caregiver during final years 148 photo with caregiver, Myrtle Flemming, **148**, Davis genetic tumors inherited through her family line, 244; sang in St. Anthony First Ward choir, 326; recalls his Mom's only whipping — on his bare hiney when swimming against her orders, 416-418; explanation of dating of photo with Alice and two sons, which appears on p. 3, 462; Jay Loveland tells of his grandmother Davis bringing gifts to him and ignoring his brother when they were both ill, 463; another account of Alice "playing favorites" among grandchildren, 463; quotation from news article about Gould and Alice's golden wedding celebration, 463; news account of anniversary party given by St. Anthony Ward genealogical society members, 463; Versal discusses his mother's initial dislike of Thelma, 464; Versal tells of his mother's possessiveness of and "spoiling" of LaVel, 464.

Davis, Christine. photo with grandpa Davis and cousin Heather, **339**; in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, C. LaVel. 1940 photo of, **92**; was "mothered" by Grandma Alice Davis, 93; 1939 photo with Alice Davis, **93**; 1938 photo in ranch kitchen, **98**; 1940 photo with Thelma and Brent on ranch porch, **99**; birth detailed in separate articles by Thelma and Versal, 99 & 431; in photo with Davis family dog, Brownie, **105**; in 1945 family photo, **116**; in 1944 photo with Thelma, **121**; in 1941 photo with parents, **123**; description of helping with farm duties as child during World War II, 124; in farm truck photo, **124**; in 1943 photo with Brent & Versal, **127**; in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo **135**; with parents at time of Island Park Reservoir accidental drowning, 135; in 1947 V.L. Davis tenth anniversary family photo, **147**; in post deer hunt photo, **159**; assists in arduous retrieval of six-point buck, 160; 1951 photo of, **167**; participates in Explorer Snake River trips, 176-177; newspaper articles about river trip, **176-177**; participation in Versal's Easter Sunday rescue in Blacksmith Fork Canyon, 177-179; news photos regarding rescue, **179**, joins Air Force and marries Colleen Olsen, 181; photo with Colleen, **181**; in 1958 family Christmas photos **190 & 191**, in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; in photo laying cement for shop and driveway, **200**; included in Alaska excursions summary, 209; participation in 1966 Caribou and moose hunting trip outlined, 210-215; Alaska photos of, **210, 213**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**, in 1974 photo of Versal with five sons, **238**, in 1975 Davis family photos, **244 & 245**, expands oil well logging business in Texas, 252, wants to hire Versal part time, 252, Versal and Thelma visit in Texas 253, summary of planes owned 257, photo of Vel by his Cessna, **257**; recession affects his business, 257; is on fishing trip when van is "baptized" in Condie Reservoir, 262, Lyle's painting of van, **263**, photo of Lauris sitting by van, **263**; in 1979 five generation photo, **264**, plans 1982 trip from Texas to Logan, 328 flies family members to Portland for deep sea fishing trip, 337, has heart attack in Texas, 347, all five Davis sons converge in Logan to visit Thelma, 354, photo of Versal with five sons, **354**, photo on Duane's ATVs **354**; participates in a family fast for Thelma's release 355, was present at Thelma's passing, 355, in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**, in photo of Davis children and spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**, goes fishing with Versal when the physical effort is difficult for his father, 370, helps care for Versal after another heart attack, 380, photos of Versal in hospital bed, **386**, arrived at the nursing center shortly after Versal's death, 388, in photos at cemetery, **388-389**, in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**, LaVel's birth during a snow storm, 431, in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**, Versal tells of his mother's possessiveness of and "spoiling" of LaVel, 464, Thelma describes Vel's assistance in fencing of back yard, 466, becomes a pilot and leaves semi-truck job as a Logan businessman, 466, Versal's account of LaVel's crash landing on the snow near the Dunkirk airport in 1970, 466, Versal expresses his appreciation to LaVel, who lost his own eyesight to health problems, for assistance on one of his last fishing trips, 471.

Davis, Carrie Crapo. in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, **327**

Davis, Colleen Olsen. marries LaVel, 181; photo with LaVel **181** in 1957 study group photo **181** in 1958 family Christmas photos, **190 & 191**, in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**, in photo of Vel by his Cessna, **257**, helps rescue family fishermen when van is "baptized", 262, Lyle's painting of van, **263**; photo of Lauris sitting by van, **263**; plans 1982 trip from Texas to Logan, 328, stressed when LaVel has heart attack, 347, in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**, in photos at cemetery, **388-389**, in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**, in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**

Davis, Corette. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**, in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**, moves to with Davis grandparents, **246**; shares special relationship with Deb, 246; helps take care of Grandma Hal, 246, attends classes at USU, 246, photo at, **247**, Versal paints her VW, 254; fishes with grandparents at Condie Reservoir, 256, in 1979 five generation photo, **264**, participates in family fast for Thelma's release, 355, was present at Thelma's passing, 355, flies to see sons to visit Versal at Logan Valley Nursing Center, 387, in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**

Davis, Dean. in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**, in photo with Dean Davis on tracks loaded with lumber **130**, describes his father's genius for inventing things, 132, one of Versal's frequent deer hunting companions, 160, Versal and Thelma spend first season Thanksgiving at his home, 281.

Davis, Debra. (see Nelson, Debra Davis)

Davis, Delois. in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, **327**

Davis, Deone. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**, in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**, recalls brother's spanking machines, 251; photo of spanking machine in 1986, **251**, in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**, in photos at cemetery, **388-389**, in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**, in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**

Davis, Don Wayne (Pat). 1941 photo of, **3**, in 1919 family portrait, **11**, swims in East Canyon Creek, 34, map showing location of, **34**, in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**, in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**, in 1949 photo with dog, Jim dog, 105, slept in room with Versal during early years, 108, moonlight described, 109, photo of muskrat, 109, photo of family log showing rabbits and muskrat caught, 109, in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**, is with Wood & Thelma log of Island Park Reservoir drowning incident, 135, comments on his mother-in-law, 145, accompanies Versal on deer hunt, 145, accompanies Versal on deer hunt, 159, one of Versal's frequent deer hunting companions, 160, in photo with sons, Myrtle [illegible], Versal and Thelma visit in Dallas on way to Alaska, 213, papers to sign, 237, explanation of dating of photo with Floyd, his brother Wayne, and Dan, north of Alice, which appears on p. 3, 462

Davis, Dorothy Munkler. [illegible] 236, wedding photo of, 236, in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**, Versal and Thelma visit at home in Washington on way to Canada, 260, at crabbing & beach photos, 260, goes crabbing, procedure described, 260, in four generation photo, 264, participates in family fast for Thelma's release, 355, was present at Thelma's passing, 355, in photo of Davis children and spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, 357, in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, 374, in photos at extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**, in photo in Versal and Thelma [illegible]

Davis, Duane McDaniel, sixth of, 183; photo with Versal, 183; in photo of excavation and cement, 200; remodeled tree house, 202; included in Alaska excursions summary, 209; 1974 Yukon River trip outlined, 216-223; 1974 Alaska photos of, **216-223**; attends scout camp, 216; photo at Camp Hunt, **216**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, 233; worked temporarily at Ace Mill, 236; 1972 trip to San Franscisco and deep sea fishing trip described, 236; in 1974 photo of Versal with five sons, 238; photo with 1975 salmon trophies, **236**; balks at idea of moving to Mendon, 241; becomes a Davis tumor bloomer, 244; in 1975 Davis family photos, **244 & 245**; assists ward member who dies of heart attack in church, 249; becomes attached to Melanie Anderson, 253; Versal paints his pickup, 254; Versal fixes his wrecked Opal and teaches him to use welder, 254; high gas prices limit travel, a factor in Thelma not accompanying Duane to MTC, 256; helps take care of Grandma Hall and house while parents go to Canada, 260; helps pull "baptized" van out of Condie Reservoir, 263; drawing and photos of van, **263**; attends Logan Temple dedication services, 264; photo of Logan Temple, **265**; parental concern about Duane's romance with very young Melanie, 268; decision to go on mission, 269; portrait with Melanie, **269**; on snowmobile excursion with Mel, 325; becomes engaged, 328; making cedar chest for Mel, 331; rushes Versal to hospital during his heart attack, 332; administers to him, 333; takes turns staying with Versal in hospital, 333; weds Melanie Anderson, 334; wedding photo, **335**; leaves for Texas to work for Vel, 335; with Versal as he gets in one last fishing trip before back surgery, 340; photo of Versal in tin boat, **340**; moves in temporarily with Versal and Thelma during Versal's back surgery, 341; Thelma is comforted to have Duane and Mel living at home during Versal's back surgery, 340; administers to Versal before back surgery, 341; participates in family prayer and priesthood blessing for Thelma, 343; assists in painting outside of Davis' Logan home, 347; photo of painting house, **347**; provides Thelma with small TV following cancer surgery, 353; all five Davis sons converge in Logan to visit Thelma, 354; photo of Versal with five sons, **354**; photo on Duane's ATVs, **354**; moves into Davis home, 355; participates in family fast for Thelma's release, 355; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**; alerts family regarding Versal's spring 1989 heart attack, 395; hosts party at his home when family gathers to be with Versal, 385; helps care for Versal after another heart attack, 386; photo of Versal in hospital bed, **386**; becomes one of Versal's main caregivers during his last few months, 386; arrives at the nursing center shortly after Versal's death, 388; in photos at cemetery, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**; Duane's tumor surgery history outlined, **460**; quotation from news article about Gould and Alice's golden wedding celebration, 463; news account of anniversary party given by St. Anthony Ward genealogical society members, 463; Thelma's journal entry regarding he hope that Duane and Melanie will be with her during Versal's surgery, 469.

Davis, Eric. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Davis, Estelle. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; recalls being afraid of grandpa Davis, 251; in spanking machine photo, **251**; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; flies with LaVel to Portland, 337; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**, in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**

Davis, Floyd Ervin. 1913 photo of, **3**; in 1919 family portrait, **11**; learns about feminine napkins while working at Swings Department Store, 14; picks up cream from woman whose cat was sitting in it, 24; drawing of cream and cat story, **24**, adept at creating and making things, 25; in photo with wooden rocking horse, **25**, helps Gould and Versal cut and peel timber during camping trip, 29; swims in Last Chance Canal, 34; map showing location of swimming holes, **34**; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**, in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**; Versal describes assisting him at his sawmill, 130; photo of sawmill, **130**; photo of son, Dean Davis, and Versal by his truck loaded with lumber, **130**, in photo with Versal next to logging truck, **131**; 1946 photo with daughter and mother, **140**; cares for his mother before she dies, 148; singing skills described, 154; photo of Floyd's singing log, **155**; photo with trombone, **155**; employs Versal during transition months between VLD family's move from St. Anthony to Logan, 171 (also see p. 465); V. L. Davis family visit to, 216; heart problems and death of, 217; photo of, **217**; family members inherit Davis family tumors, 244; sang for years with Versal in a St. Anthony male quartet, 326; lumbering with Versal for building logs, 428; timber work with Versal after the war, 433, explanation of dating of photo with Floyd, her brother, Wayne, and their mother, Alice, which appears on p. 3, 462; gives Versal work during transition between move from St. Anthony to Logan, 465.

Davis, Garrett. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Inge Scheffel. marries Brent Davis, 199; in wedding photo, **199**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; Versal and Thelma visit at home in Washington on way to Canada, 260; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Jacqueline Millward (Jackie). marries Brian Davis, 199; wedding photo, **199**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; attends BYU Education Week with Thelma and Versal, 254; Versal and Thelma visit at home in Washington on way to Canada, 260; in photos on beach, **260**; goes crabbing, procedure described, 260; helps Thelma following cancer surgery, 353 & 355; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; family stays at Bessie's home for a few days, 372; in photos at cemetery, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Jamie Puhlmann. photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Jeffrey. in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Jennifer. in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; learns lesson in gratitude from Grandpa Davis, 372; photo of thank you note to Grandpa and Bessie, **372**; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Jetawn (Tawny). becomes a Davis tumor bloomer, 244; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; learns lesson in gratitude from Grandpa Davis, 372; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**; Tawny's tumor surgery history outlined, **460**

Davis, Jim. becomes a Davis tumor bloomer, 244; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467; Jims's tumor surgery history outlined, **460**.

Davis, Joanna. Bessie Davis is mistaken for her, 362.

Davis, John Gould. blesses Versal, 3; 1918 photo with two horses, **4**; 1881 photo of, **6**; pioneering spirit described, 6; youth described, 6; served on St. Anthony Cemetery board, 6; 1942 Golden Wedding portrait of, **7**; story of gunslinger in Spanish Fork, 8; photo of, **8**; in 1919 family portrait, **11**; enjoys listening to Atwater Kent radio, 18; accidently eats wood worming during camping trip, 29; uses dynamite to remove lava formations, 32; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; serves as dookeeper in Idaho legislature, 45; rescues Dutch from chasing bull, 48; grew seed peas, 49; 1930 photo in field of peas, **49**; in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; has Versal apologize to Old Man Froke about stealing potatoes, 58; takes Versal on logging trip, 71; brands his cattle, 76; drawing of his brand, **76**; taught Versal to care for horses, 81; photo with draft horses: Flora, Floss, Queen, and Sullivan, **81**; shares ranch house with Versal & Thelma, 93; in background of photo showing Pat and dog, **105**; in photo with Davis family dog, Brownie, **105**; secondary role on ranch following heart attack, 117; in 1941 extended Davis family photo, **117**; Golden Anniversary described, 119; in Golden Anniversary cake photo, **119**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**; description of his death, 120; photo in casket, **120**; Versal compares his heart attack to his father's, 334; photo of, **335**; exerted controlled physical effort during years following his own heart attack, 334; Versal describes parent's anguish when home burns, 413; Gould's construction of new home on Last Chance Property, 414; Versal describes family relationships during his childhood, 414; punishments inflicted on Versal by Gould with hand-picked "willers," 419; Versal explains obtaining firewood with his Dad for home use, 428; spring cleaning of irrigation system and mending fences, 428; explanation of various properties, 428; Gould's responsibilities as watermaster of Dewey Canal, 429; shares ranch home with Versal and Thelma, 431.

Davis, Jonathan. in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Katrina. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Keiko Ishikawa. photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Kennan. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Kimberly. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photos at cemetery, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Kyler. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Laureen. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; goes on snowmobile excursion with Duane, Melanie, and Robert Hansen; 325; participates in family fast for Thelma's release, 355; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Lauris Hall. birth of, 172; newborn photo of, **172**; recalls lunch time naps at shop with Versal, 183; in photos of 1958 Yellowstone trip, **188 & 189**; in 1958 family Christmas photos, **190 & 191**; in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; with Versal's prize deer in 1965 photo, **198**; in backyard tree, **202**; included in Alaska excursions summary, 209; participation in 1966 Caribou and moose hunting trip outlined, 210-215; Alaska photos of, **211, 212, 213**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; marries Dorothy Minkler, 236; wedding photo, **236**; works at Ace Mill, 236; remembers pranks at shop, 236; in 1974 photo of Versal with five sons, **238**; becomes a Davis tumor bloomer, 244; in 1975 Davis family photos, 244 & **245**; helps Dad when varnish is accidentally sprayed in his eyes, 246; Versal and Thelma visit at home in Washington on way to Canada, 260; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; goes crabbing, procedure described, 260; Versal expresses appreciation for his handling of mission expenses, 311; takes turns staying with Versal in hospital following his first heart attack, 333; flies with LaVel to Portland for deep sea fishing trip, 337; administers to Versal before back surgery, 341; assists in painting outside of Davis' Logan home, 347; all five Davis sons converge in Logan to visit Thelma, 354; photo of Versal with five sons, **354**; photo on Duane's ATVs, **354**; participates in a family fast for Thelma's release, 355; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; helps care for Versal after another heart attack, 386; becomes one of Versal's main caregivers during his last few months, 386; was with Versal when he died, 388; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**; Lauris' tumor surgery history outlined, **460**; Lauris relates memories of garden, basement steps, upstairs bedroom, "water day" on the back lawn, 465; calls LaVel a "fuzz" as he begins his new job as a Logan policeman, 466, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467.

Davis, LaVern. spends 1980 Thanksgiving at brother Dean's home along with Versal and Thelma, 281

Davis, Leatha. (see Macfarlane, Leatha Davis)

Davis, Lyle. in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**, is on fishing trip when van is "baptized" in Condie Reservoir, 262; Lyle's painting of van, **263**, photo of Lauris sitting by van, **263**, in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; goes fishing with Versal when the physical effort is difficult for his grandpa, 376; photo of Versal teaching Lyle and Travis how to cook fish, **376**, visits his grandpa Davis when he is dying in Logan Valley Nursing Center, 387; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Lynette. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in 1979 five generation photo, **264**, participates in a family fast for Thelma's release, 355, was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in photo in Versal and Thelma four generation chart, **456-457**, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467

Davis, Marci. in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in tug-of-war photo, **250**; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; in four generation photo, **266**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**, Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 467.

Davis, Marinda. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Melanie Anderson. begins attachment with Duane, 253; attends Logan Temple dedication services, 264; photo of Logan Temple, **265**; parental concern about Duane's romance with very young Melanie, 268; Duane's decision to go on mission and her support, 269; portrait with Melanie, **269**; on snowmobile excursion with Duane, 325; becomes engaged, 328; weds Duane, 334; wedding photo, **335**; leaves for Texas where Duane works for LaVel, 335; with Versal as he gets in one last fishing trip before back surgery, 340; Thelma is comforted to have Duane and Mel living at home during Versal's back surgery, 340; moves in temporarily with Versal and Thelma during Versal's back surgery, 341; provides Thelma with small TV following cancer surgery, 353; moves into Davis home, 355; participates in a family fast for Thelma's release 355; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**; Thelma's journal entry regarding he hope that Duane and Melanie will be with her during Versal's surgery, 469

Davis, Merlie Damaris. (see Olsen Merlie Damaris)

Davis, Michelle. tells of tender moment with Grandpa Davis in his pea patch, 256; photo of, **256**; is with her mother while Jackie cares for Thelma following her final cancer surgery, 353; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Davis, Myrtle Potter. in 1941 Davis family photo **119**; with Versal & Thelma just before Island Park Reservoir drowning accident, 135; accompanies Versal on deer hunt, 159; one of Versal's frequent deer hunting companions, 160; photo of, **217**; in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, **327**; in photo with husband Pat 217 Versal and Thelma visit in Chester on way to Alaska, 127

Davis, Phoenix. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart **456-457**

Davis ranch. description of various properties Could farmed, 10; drawing of ranch properties, 12; another description of properties, 69; photo of irrigation and fencing on, 69; named after East Chance Canal, 94; Versal compares ranch in 1948 with 1988, 142; 1988 Sand Creek sand photo, 142; ranch house photo, **143**; ranch property photos, **144**; childhood chores, 413; delivering, castrating, breaking and inoculating cattle, 422; privies, outhouses, 423; dropped out of school because needed at ranch, 426; spring cleaning of irrigation system and harvesting hay, 428; explanation of various properties, 428; his father's responsibilities as a commissioner of Dewey Canal, then his, 429; Thelma's views with farming and cattle especially during wet years, 432; harvest chores described, 435; use of horses on the ranch, 435; cattle drive, 437, 438

Davis ranch home. 1917 front and rear photos, 94; named after the East Chance Canal, 94; 1988 photo **143**; his father's construction of new home on East Chance Property, 414; Versal lived in home during childhood until 10 years after marriage, 414.

Davis, Savanna. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart **456-457**

Davis, Shauna. in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; in 1975 Davis family photo, **245**; in photo of Val by his Cessna 257; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**; in photo of Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**

Davis, Tamara (see Clark, Tamara Davis)

Davis, Teresa Hunter Priest. photo in Versal and Thelma four generation chart **456-457**

Davis, Thelma Hall.

Chapter One: Boyhood Memories calls Versa "Dorie", 3; brief description of assorted years in youth, 10; Versal describes knowing her in grade school, 38; describes nicknames and scrapbooks, 42; 1929 8th grade photo with Versal and Thelma, 43

Chapter Three: As a Teen [illegible] Versal and friends steal ice cream (they thought) from dorm room, 83; 1936 photo with Versal by car, 83; 1938 Easter 4th photo with friends, 86; Versal has close running of 86 attends college, 86; begins teaching at Heart Basin, 87; marriage described, 89; photo at Thelma's account of courtship, 90; 1939 photo with Versal's embroidered initials and Thelma's explanation of when and how he gave it to her, 91; photo at age 18, 91; description of borrowing money from her Aunt Fern to attend college, 91

Chapter Four: Early Ranch Life 1938 photo in ranch kitchen with baby LaVel, 98; 1940 photo with Brent and LaVel on ranch porch, 99; describes circumstances of LaVel's birth, 99; 1941 photo with Versal by boat, 103; in photo with Davis family dog, Smarty, 105; with Kellers & Peters on scouting trip to Yellowstone Park in 1941, 106 & 107; photos of 1941 Yellowstone trip, **106 & 107**; photo of boat capsizing trip in 1938, **109**; gives Versal a new description [illegible] on derrick cable, 111; writes account of Versal trying to rope a steer, 114

Chapter Five: War Years in 1943 family photo, **116**; reaction on Dec. 7, 1942 when war declared, 116; in 1943 Davis family photo, **119**; 1943 photo with LaVel, 121; in 1942 photo in banks of Snake River, 122; 1941 photo with sons, 123; photo of island Heart with Thelma, **126**; Brent's birth described, 126; [illegible] 1943 describes war rationing, 127; photo at necklace with second grade class at Lincoln School, 133; photo as teacher with Farm Center students, 133; in 1943 Rees Hall family photo, 135; describes Island Park Reservoir drowning accident, 135

Chapter Six: St. Anthony Years 1946 "Lum's Castle" photo with Versal, **146**; in 1946 V. L. Davis [illegible] anniversary family photo, 147; family dinners during Alice Davis' final years, 148; describes church positions held in St. Anthony, 149; [illegible] affirms Versal's many years of civil activity, 150; describes various events during retirement years of six years here, 150; photo with ball cap, 150; photo with bride, Dennis and Pauline Davis, 161; [illegible] by Linda on [illegible] 1963 photo with Versal, Heidi and Teresa, 167

Chapter Seven: Early Logan Years [illegible] moved from St. Anthony to Logan, 171; Mother's school at St. Anthony, 171; 1961 Quilting [illegible] Convention, [illegible] Arlington and Eugene, 171; Gales at chapter club, 171; parents of Logan home, 171; live temporarily in Joe's Room, 171; moves to Logan, 171; across with Wrens to Logan Day Nursery Open, [illegible], 172; newspaper photo about Logan Nursery Dance Festival, 172; photo with Nursery Queen, 180; [illegible] group photo, 181; in process of 1958 Yellowstone trip, **188 & 189**; in 1958 family Christmas photos, **190 & 191**; at 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, 192; spends Silver Anniversary in Sun Valley, Idaho, 196; photo in Ketchum, 196; photo with camping buddies, 196.

Chapter Eight: Alaska [illegible] several hunting trips [illegible] deer [illegible] introduced to Alaska excursions summary, 209; 1974 Yukon River trip outlined, 210-220; 1974 Alaska photos on 216-223 [illegible] article, 220; 1984 Alaska sightseeing trip outlined, 224-229; 1984 Alaska photos, **224-229**; experiences cancer symptoms on 1984 Alaska trip, 229; is told her cancer is treatable, 229.

Chapter Nine. Mid-Life in Logan: tells of Versal's change from guns to cameras, 231; encourages reluctant Versal to attend genealogy class, 232; photo in genealogy library, **232**; expresses love of genealogy work, 232; 1972 trip to San Francisco and deep sea fishing trip described, 236; photo with 1975 salmon trophies, **236**; story of five bragging size fish, 237; tells of shop buddies joining in successful Blacksmith Reservoir fishing trip, 237; tells of shop employees' casting contest during successful fishing trip, 238; returns to college for advanced degree, 140; photo in cap and gown, **240**; considers then discards idea of moving to Mendon, 241; big falling out with Dad over her decision not to work after getting college degree, 241; saga of "traveling" love letter to Thelma in California, 242; photo of love letter, **242**; in photo on Tiffany's blessing day, **242**; in 1975 Davis family photos, **244 & 245**; participation in Logan First Ward outlined, 248; attends BYU Education Week with Versal and others, 254; tells of Versal's impatience as he begins retirement, 255; photo of, **255**; gardening and food storage take on renewed emphasis during recession, 256; high gas prices limit travel, 256; records Deb and Versal's special affection for Coalie, 257 & 258; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; describes crabbing in Washington, 260; in 1979 five generation photo, **264**; becomes a great grandmother, 264; five generation photo, **264**; attends Logan Temple dedication services, 264; photo of Logan Temple, **265**; summary of Grandma Hall's six years with Versal and Thelma in Logan, 266; in four generation photo, **266**; Versal's tribute to Thelma's parents, 267; faces family challenges, 268; expresses love for family despite shortcomings, 268; parental concern about Duane's romance with very young Melanie, 268; Duane's decision to go on mission and her support, 269; records how jest about Versal's neck tie indirectly leads to mission call, 269-271;

Chapter Ten: Our Mission: photo as newly called as missionaries, **272** (also see extensive chapter, 468); more info about receiving mission call, 273; one final fishing trip before mission, 273; news article regarding mission call, **275**; Mission Training Center impressions, 276; MTC photo, **276**; first impressions of mission assignment at Maricopa Indian Branch, 278-279; photographed by *Church News* photographer on first day, 280; spends first mission Thanksgiving at Dean Davis' home with other family members included, 281; proud Indian woman confronts Thelma then becomes friendly, 282; creates comprehensive map of reservation, **285, 308 ,309**; refusal to give a man money for alcohol at first angers him then gains his respect, 290; teaches sewing, music, games, gardening, and aerobic dancing to Indians, 292-293; photo of garden, **293**; in photo with Ringleros, **295**; gaining acceptance among Indians, 300; photo of "Bald Eagle" and "Cotton Top", **300**; photo of Thelma journal-writing in mission trailer, **301**; string of burglaries on reservation outlined, 301-305; near-witnesses to a murder, 303; changes mission emphasis from welfare services to proselyting, 307; identifies three clans to target for proselyting, 307; proselyting Lola Young Clan outlined, 307-308; proselyting Melinda Card Clan outlined, 308-309; proselyting Sundust Clan outlined, 310 - 311; proselyting Mack Brothers outlined, 311; discouraged at mid-mission, 311; photo of mission trailer and Versal's Toyota, **311**; describes PeePosh "ditch-pool", 314; photo of pool, **314**; dances at community Chicken Scratch party, 317; their dancing has wide impact on Indians, 317; photo of Thelma's journal entry describing her love for Versal diligence despite physical ailments, **318**; writes, embroiders and reads while Versal fixes oldsters' homes, 319; expresses regret at having to leave mission early, 319; expresses love and say goodbyes to Indian investigators and friends, 320; say goodbyes at Community Center meeting, 320; status of mission progress summarized, 321; LaVel drives from Texas to accompany Versal and Thelma back home; 321; return to Arizona in 1983 for temple sealing of McMillian family, 321; express desire and hope of serving a second mission in Maricopa Indian Branch, 321; photo with McMillians on day of departure from mission, **320**.

Chapter Eleven: Our Older Years: 1984 photo with Versal, 322; Versal's 1981 "words cannot express" entry about Thelma, which summarizes their life together thus far, 324; Versal's penchant for sentimental gift giving, 325; Versal gives Thelma new piano, 325; photo of piano, **326**; begins taking piano lessons from Richard Hill, 325; accompanies Versal's singing engagements, 326; Versal discusses Thelma's ability to cut his hair, 328; progressive photos of Versal's hair styles over the years, **328**; $122 trout story, 329; friendship with Wesley and Thora Norton, 328; Thelma catches 11 fish to Versal's 1, 330; Fisherman's ditty, **330**; Mom's account of a cold-but-peaceful day's fishing on Johnson Reservoir, 330; magazine photo of elderly couple fishing, **331**; making final arrangements for another mission assignment, 332; get pre-mission physicals, 332; her account of Versal's first heart attack, 332; in Duane & Mel's wedding photo, **335**; in Deb & Trey's wedding photo, **335**; become empty nesters, 335; tries to develop patience during Versal's physical struggles, 337; adjusts her schedule to his, 337; pays tribute to Versal's work ethic, 338; Versal and Thelma's helplessness and distress in Logan following Deb's Texas tumor surgery, 339; with Versal as he gets in one last fishing trip before back surgery, 340; photo of Versal in tin boat, **340**; summary of Versal's back surgery, 341; comforted to have Duane and Mel living at home during Versal's back surgery, 340; urged by Maricopa Branch president to serve second mission there, 342; travels to Arizona for sealing of McMillan family in Mesa Temple, 342; in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**; begins "spotting" and suspects health problems developing, 343; family members participate in family prayer and priesthood blessing for Thelma, 343; recalls blessing as a 3-year-old after drinking paint thinner, 343 (also see chapter note, 470); diagnoses with uterine cancer, 343; has hysteroctomy, 343; reflects on mortality, 344; photo by flowers on Seattle grounds, **344**; though frail, prepares for another Alaska trip this time with the Virgins, 345; leaves for Alaska but returns early when Fern Virgin developed some physical difficulties, 345; photo with Virgins, **345**; drives to Texas for LaVel's open heart surgry, stay four days, then return home for chemotherapy treatments 348; flies to Texas for two week "therapy trip" to visit Vel and Deb's families, 348; receives compliment from Delta stewardess, 348; photo in Texas at Deb's house, **349**; begins radiation treatments, 349; at odds with Versal over another Alaska trip, 350; Thelma does an about face and supports the Alaska trip, 350; Dad's obsession with Alaska trumps his fear of physical consequences so they go on Alaska trip with Virgins, 351; photo of Thelma in British Columbia, **351**; final surgery at L.D.S. Hospital in Salt Lake City summarized, 352; visit by President Hinckley in hospital, 352; loses 50 pounds and grows weaker, 352; photo of 10 Nov. 1984 journal page recording post-surgery news and appreciations, **353**; photo of Thelma sitting at kitchen table writing in journal, **353**; concentrates on recording personal history during her final months, 353; records Logan First Ward Relief Society history, 353; Versal chronicles Thelma's decline, 354; all five Davis sons converge in Logan to visit Thelma, 354; photo with five sons, **354**; passing described by Twila, 355; photo of newspaper obituary, **357**; acrylic portrait of Thelma painted by Deb, 359; photo of Thelma which Deb painted portrait from, 359.

Chapter Twelve: Bessie and Me: in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo with Tami, **364**; acted as "glue" to family during her life; 375; Versal misses her counsel when their children need help and comfort; 375; is a participant in one of Versal's silly dreams, 380.

Chapter Thirteen: Reflections: 1974 photo of Versal and Thelma, **393**; 1984 photo of Versal and Thelma, **399**. Versal reflects on Thelma's ability to adapt during their 48 years together, 398; Thelma's thoughts on adapting and compromise, 399; Versal and Thelma's poignant, heart-felt letters written to each other as a method to work out a difficult, divisive issue in 1973, 400-403. 1972 photo of Versal and Thelma, **403**.

Chapter Fourteen: The Life History of Versal LaVel Davis: Versal's first meeting Thelma in 4th grade, 426; was Thelma's classmate from 6th grade through junior year in high school, 426; tells of respect for Thelma as a teen, 427; Thelma wins highest school award all four years of high school, 427; courting Thelma at Ricks, 430; engagement, 430; civil marriage, 430; share ranch home with parents during early marriage years, 431; LaVel's birth during a snow storm, 431; Thelma assists with farming and cattle especially during war years, 432; Thelma as Versal's partner in traveling, 441; Versal's tribute to Thelma, 442; his and Thelma's service as missionaries in the Arizona Tempe Mission, 445; Thelma's uterine cancer, 446; Thelma's death in 1985, 447; Versal's testimony of being together with Thelma again, 448; all personal history materials given to Twila, 449; Thelma's care for her mother, 450; Versal' slove for Thelma, Logan and family, 451; will soon be with Thelma, 451.

Chapter Fifteen: Supplemental Information: plans for dispersal of earthly possessions before death, 453; distribution of possessions made following Thelma's funeral, 453; all genealogical, family and personal history records given to Twila, 435; photo of portion of family records, **452-453**; Versal's fan pedigree chart, **454**; Versal and Thelma's family group sheet, **455**; Versal and Thelma's four generation chart with photos, **456-457**; discussion of the Davis family tumors, 458; chart showing probable transmission of tumor genes in the Davis family, **459**; "Davis Family Tumor History," 460-461.

Chapter Notes: tells of jumping off bridge into Snake River and terror when fighting to get back to surface, 462; extensive quote from letter written by Thelma giving more details of Brian's birth, 463; Versal discusses his mother's initial dislike of Thelma, 464; Versal tells of his mother's possessiveness of and "spoiling" of LaVel, 464; excerpts from Thelma's 1952 day planner giving details of family's 3-month transition period between moving out of St. Anthony home and into Logan home, 465; Ada Ostermiller describes St. Anthony's "Vets Units," which the Davis family lived in during transition months in 1952, 465; Thelma documents move to Logan in her day planner, 465; tells of weekly dance classes she and Versal teach, 465; Thelma relates intensity of pre-Gold-and-Green-ball rehearsals during subzero weather, 466; Thelma describes fencing of back yard, 466; Thelma writes of Versal's and Deb's opinions of "Expo 74" in Spokane, Washington, 466; Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren, 367; Thelma's account of her surprisingly negative reaction to their mission call and Versal's priesthood blessing to help her overcome it, 468; Thelma quotes Indian history book regarding belief in "dogs as persons," 468; her journal entry regarding he hope that Duane and Melanie will be with her during Versal's surgery, 469; Thelma's account of drinking turpentine as a child and her miraculous recovery following her father's priesthood blessing, 470; Thelma records journal entry indicating Bessie was her visiting teacher shortly before here death, 470.

Davis, Twila (see Bird, Twila Davis).

Davis, V. Brent. tells of learning to swim in the Snake River, 35; 1940 photo, **92**; 1940 photo with Thelma and LaVel on ranch porch, **99**; cost of birth described, 99; in photo with Davis family dog, Brownie, **105**; in 1945 family photo, **116**; in 1941 photo with parents, **123**; description of helping with farm duties as child during World War II, 124; photo in farm truck, **124**; describes hammering truck lights, 124; in 1943 photo with LaVel & Versal, **127**; describes living on ranch, 127; describes his father's skill in building and maintaining equipment, 132; in Jick &

Ruby Hall family photo, **135**; with parents at time of Island Park Reservoir accidental drowning, 135; in 1947 V. L. Davis tenth anniversary family photo, **147**; remembers his dad's service as volunteer fireman, 152; remembers Al Schnurle shooting a hole through his hand, 162; collects snakes in lunch box, 166; learns to swim in Snake River, 166; newspaper photo showing swimming lessons in river, **166**; 1951 photo of, **167**; recalls co-worker stealing Dad's tools, 172; in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**; Klondike camp experience, 175; 1951 photo, **175**; Explorer Snake River trips, 176-177; newspaper articles about river trip, **176-177**; parcipitation in Versal's Easter Sunday rescue in Blacksmith Fork Canyon, 177-179; news photos, **179**; babysits Debra, 180; in Army and sends Christmas gifts from Hawaii, 191; in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; rabbit hunts in Snowville, 197; marries Inge Scheffel, 199; wedding photo, **199**; first architect of tree house, 202; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; works temporarily at Ace Mill, 236; worries about Versal working in paint fumes, 236; in 1974 photo of Versal with five sons, **238**; in 1975 Davis family photos, **244 & 245**; Versal and Thelma visit at home in Washington on way to Canada, 260; in crabbing at beach photos, **260**; goes crabbing, procedure described, 260; goes deep sea fishing with other Davis family members, 337; goes on 1983 deep sea fishing trip, 346; all five Davis sons converge in Logan to visit Thelma, 354; photo of Versal with five sons, **354**; in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**; Brent's account of the snakes in the lunch box episode, 465.

Davis, Vera Jane. (see Loveland, Vera Jane Davis)

Davis, Versal LaVel.

Front Pages: signs name in cement, ii; photo of cement signature, **ii**; 1936 photo with embroidered initials, **vi**; teaches Twila to fish, viii; 1958 photo in fishing gear, **viii**.

Chapter One: Boyhood Memories: baby photo, **2**; birth of, 3; nicknamed "Dark", 3 (also see p. 88); evolution of name, 3; blessed by his father, 3; watches home burn, 4; 1924 photo with Damaris, **5**; describes boyhood years on ranch, 10; in 1919 family portrait, **11**; outhouse challenges with Dutch, 14; gets fish hook stuck in eye, 16; is sewn into his long johns, 16; is almost run over by a car, 17; enjoys listening to Atwater Kent radio, 18; describes early wind-up telephones, 18; describes coal oil lamps, 18; describes vinegar fizz, 19; spears pig with pitch fork, 20; tries to get cat to pull miniature sleigh, 25; raises "bum lambs" separated from mothers during annual sheep drive, 26; tells of Indians camped near ranch, 27; tells about lost dog, "Wolf", during logging trip, 28; illustration of "Wolf at Midnight," **28**, tells of his dad eating a wood worm during camping trip, 29; describes haying, 30-31; falls asleep on horse as a "derrick boy," 31; swims in Last Chance Canal, 34; map showing location of swimming spots, **34**; in 1934 photo on Twin Groves Bridge, **35**; describes putting tongue on frozen horse bit, 36; tells of stubbornness of "Ole Peter," the family mule, 37; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; describes schooling at Central School, 38; in 1924 3rd grade photo, **39**, describes riding in school wagon after dogs had used it as a temporary kennel, **40**; describes rivalry between "southsiders" and "northsiders," 41; map showing north and south division in St. Anthony, **41**, tells of "peanut busts" at school, 43; 1929 8th grade photo with Versal and Thelma, **43**; tells of his niece beating him to mailbox and accidentally fracturing his arm, 44; has a one armed tutor during months father serves as doorkeeper for state legislature, 45, uncle-nephew relationship with Dutch, 47

Chapter Two: Me 'N Dutch: 1934 photo at Keefer Park with Dutch, **46**, gorges on pears with Dutch, 49; climbs lava cliffs with Dutch, 50; makes homemade mosquito repellent, 51; rolls down hill inside tires, 51, 1919 photo of, **51** is injured in ice skating accident, 51, ignites dynamite cap with Dutch, 53 in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; threatens to cut nieces ears off, 55; steals soda at Venice Dance Hall, 56; has fun with homemade skis, 58; goes on chickoree, 58; 1927 photo of, **59**; gives fermented mash to chickens, 60; drawing of drunk chickens, **60**; hypnotizes chickens, 61; describes how to make and use a flipper, 61; drawing of flipper, **61**; traps and brands chislers, 62; 1929 photo of, **62**; makes arrows from cattails, 62; describes skill with.22 rifle in shooting rabbits and chislers, 63; uses cow salt lick to flavor roasted dove, 64; lassos a pig, 64; drawing of lassoed pig, **65**; catch suckers in Last Chance Canal, 66; photo of sucker, **66**; catches 92 "red specks" on overnight camping/fishing trip, 67; 1946 photo with string of fish, **67**.

Chapter Three: As a Teen: 1930 photo of, **68**; cleans canals and repairs fences on ranch, 69; photo of fences and Last Chance Canal, **69**; baptized in Egan Canal, 70; collects fast offerings with Dutch, 71; appreciates natural beauty on logging trip with his Dad, 71; repairing and cleaning irrigation system, 74; drawing of irrigation system, **74**; finds human skeleton while repairing canal, 75; assists Dad in branding, dehorning, and castrating cattle, 76; drawing of Davis brand, 76; brands horses, 77; drawing of bucking branded horse, **77**; explains harvesting process, 78; breaks Tess to use as a draft horse, 80; describes neighborhood rodeos, 81; owns a motorcycle for one day, 81; photo of motorcycle, **81**; improvising car radio with wire connected to barbed wire fence, 82; steals ice cream (he thought) from dorm room, 83; 1936 photo with Thelma by car, **83**; sics "Old Fritz" on Blaine Singleton, 84; worries about mother's reaction to coming home late from movie, 86; gives a summary of courtship with Thelma, 86-87; embroiders his initials on photo and gives to Thelma, **91**.

Chapter Four: Early Ranch Life: 1940 photo, **92** describes infestation of cicadas, 96; 1930s photos of cicada infestation, **96**; describes circumstances of LaVel's birth, 99; gingerly releases skunk caught in trap, 101; recalls first introduction to a ballpoint pen, 102; description of serious eye injury while living on ranch and skill of drug-addicted doctor who treated him, 102; 1941 photo with Thelma by boat, **103**; Versal and Thelma's weeklong trip with friends to Yellowstone Park in 1941, 106 & 107; photos of 1941 Yellowstone trip, **106 & 107**; Versal cited by game warden during Yellowstone fishing trip, 108; Versal and Pat trap muskrats during ranch years, 108; photo of muskrat, **109**, muskrats described, 109; photo of ranch log showing numbers of muskrats killed, **109**; description of ranch expenses in 1939, 109; growing and harvesting described, 110; photos of, **110 & 111**; in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**; Thelma gives him a near-disastrous thrill ride on derrick cable, 111; describes horses and how he cared for them, 112; photo of Versal with Old Buck, **112**; ends up in slew while trying to rope a steer, 113; drawing of tail into slew, **113**

Chapter Five: War Years: in 1948 family photo **116**; reaction on Dec. 7, 1942 when war declared, 118; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**; tribute to Thelma's help during World War II, 121; tribute to his mother in her later years, 121; assumes role as water master following father's death, 121; becomes active in scouting, 121; in 1942 photo on banks of Snake River, 122; draft status during World War II, 122; 1945 photo with sons, **123**; on tractor, **124**; in 1943 photo with LaVel & Brent, **127**; photos of wartime pages in farm record book, **128 & 129**; describes assisting LaVel at his sawmill and resulting injury, 130; photo of sawmill, **130**; in photo with Dean Davis by truck loaded with lumber, 130; at photo with Floyd near scrounged mink, 131; severs finger while logging with Floyd, 131; photo of home built logging outfit, 132; Brent describes Versal's ingenuity in building and maintaining farm equipment, 132; describes euphoria when war ended, 133; in Ray & Ruby Hall family photo, 135; attempted to end Island Park Reservoir accidental drowning, 135; newspaper clipping of drowning and Versal's part in rescue, 137; photo in homemade boat on Yellowstone Lake, **136**; describes grazing elk from tractor, 138; photo of elk, **138**; eats elk meat and has meat with a taste, 139; sons of acquaintances looking to moving from draft free town, 141; compares draft in 1960s with that in 1940s, 142; by old ranch home in 1988, **143**; apprentices as auto mechanics specialist, 147 (see also p. 464).

Chapter Six: St. Anthony Years: 1946 "Clark Gable" photo with Thelma, **146**; 1947 V. L. Davis tenth anniversary family photo, **147**; family stresses during Alice Davis' final years, 148 (also see 464); purchases St. Anthony home 149; refurbishes auto twice after it was stolen and wrecked, 148; photos by car, **148**; is saved from being crushed to death by car, 150; serves as a volunteer fireman, **152**; photo of volunteer fireman's badge, **152**; has lock jaw, 154; singing skills described, 154; photo of Floyd's singing log, **155**; mentions "less active" years in church, 156; describes church positions held in St. Anthony, 157; tells about power of evil spirits, 157; relates circumstances of Twila's birth, 158; post deer hunt photo, **159**; describes arduous retrieval of six point buck, 160; describes several elk hunts, 160; photo with bull elk, **161**; photo with rifle and rock chuck, **162**; tells of adventures in sand dunes and ice caves, 163; photo in sand dunes, **163**; 1951 photo with Thelma, Twila and Debra, 167

Chapter Seven: Early Logan Years: works in Floyd's machine shop during transition months between St. Anthony and Logan, 171; purchases Logan home, 171; lives temporarily in Vera Jane's, 171; moves to Logan, 171; employed at Transport Motor in Logan, 171; newspaper article announcing Versal's Service Manager, 172; serves with Thelma as Logan First Ward Dance directors, 172; in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, 172; is Logan First Ward scoutmaster, 174; eagle scout photo, **174**; Versal's scouting progression described, 174; Klondike camp out with Brent, 175; participation in Explorer Snake River trips, 176-177; in newspaper articles about river trip, **176-177**; his Easter Sunday rescue in Blacksmith Fork Canyon, 177-179; news photos of rescue, 179; photo with toddler Debra, **180**; in 1951 study group photo, **181**; begins working at Ace Mill, 182; photo in Ace Mill crane cab, **182**; creates pipe bomb with Reed Johnson, 183; photo in shop paint room, **183**; assists Reed Johnson in boosting conveyors car over an with crane, 184; fishes for seagulls at Yellowstone, 186; photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone, **186**; participation in plays, pageants, and other community events, 187; photos as Roman soldier in play, **187**; photo as Moses at plays, **187**; photo as judge in Dairy Pageant, **187**; photo on ward hay crew, **187**; poses bear with water bag, 188; in photos of 1958 Yellowstone trip, **188 & 189**; fishes with Bear beside him in river, 189; enjoys playing Santa and making gifts at Christmas, 190; in 1958 family Christmas photos, **190 & 191**; in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; corrects when and name gets too loud, 193; in photo with toddler Dianne, 193; ponders on how cricket ate with eight children, 193; drawing of Versal surrounded by eight babies, **194**; injures foot while welding, 195; two photos of him welding, 195; spends Snow Anniversary together in high Uintahs, 196; photo of Mirrors, **196**; learning not to eat to much, 196; describes several deer hunting trips, 197; in photos of hunting shots, 197; with prize deer in two photos, **198**; in photos of go-kart loaded with camping supplies, 197; worries about finances, 200; photo buying rentals on shop and driveway, 200; builds new garage, 201; photo of finished garage, 201

Chapter Eight: Alaska: artistic painting of home overlooking the Naknek River in Alaska, 206; fascination with Alaska, 207; lure of "great outdoors," 207; and planning excursion to Alaska, 208; summary of excursions to Alaska, 208; participation in 1986 summer and circle fishing trip explained, 210-213; 1986 Alaska photos of, 210, 211, 212 & 213; 1974 Yukon River trip outlined, 214; 1974 Alaska photos of, 216-223; 1984 Alaska sightseeing trip outlined, 224-229; 1984 Alaska photos, 224-229; plans for Denali, while in Alaska, 230

Chapter Nine: Mid Life in Logan: photo of residence in Logan Canyon, 240; greeting and photographing famous sojourners, 241; photo in his den, 241; summary of 1978 Alaska whale killing escapade, "Kimberly Leah," 244; photo showing "Kimberly Leah," 244; work-related hobbies and personality shop employees described, 246; shop set-up and Thelma, the glue, seeing duty on fishing

other family members included, 281; photo with Vera, **281**; makes set of "gold plates" for visual aid on mission, 284; is confronted when wanting to take photo of burned out harvester, 284; photo of harvester, **284**; creates comprehensive map of reservation, **285, 308 ,309**; attends and describes wake of Carroll Redbird, 286; gives extended description of Maricopa wake, 286-289; drawing of cremation pyre, **288**; enjoys using his hands more than his mouth, 291; in photo with clean-up crew, **291**; encouraged to teach how to do things rather than doing it for them, 291; Versal lists activities used to teach independence and new skills, 292; photo of list, **292**; teaches welding, gardening, and basic repairs, 292-293; photo of garden, **293**; summary of teaching progress with investigators, 294-299; baptizes four investigators, 299, photo of baptized persons, **299**; fun-loving mischieveousness with Indian children, 300; gaining acceptance with Indians, 300; photo of "Bald Eagle" and "Cotton Top", **300**; string of burglaries on reservation outlined, 301-305; near-witnesses to a murder, 303; begins speaking up at community meetings and wakes, 306; speaks about the Plan of Salvation at wake and causes big stir, 306; changes mission emphasis from welfare services to proselyting, 307; identifies three clans to target for proselyting, 307; proselyting the Lola Young Clan outlined, 307-308; proselyting the Melinda Card Clan outlined, 308-309; proselyting the Sundust Clan outlined, 310 - 311; proselyting the Mack Brothers outlined, 311; discouraged at mid-mission, 311; photo of mission trailer and Versal's Toyota, **311**; feels effects of intense heat, 312 & 314; physical probelms summarized: hemorrhoids, arthritis, stomach-side pain, weakness and profuse sweating, sciatic nerve problems, 316; dances at community Chicken Scratch party, 317; their dancing has wide impact on Indians, 317; asked to supervise repair of senior citizen's homes, 317; photo of Thelma's journal entry describing her love for Versal's diligence despite his physical ailments, **318**; summary of initial progress in fixing oldster's homes, 318-319; prostate cancer diagnosed, 319; expresses regrets at having to leave mission early, 319; express love to Indian investigators and friends, 320; say goodbyes at Community Center meeting, 320; status of mission progress summarized, 321; LaVel drives from Texas to accompany Versal and Thelma back home; 321; return to Arizona in 1983 for temple sealing of McMillian family, 321; expresses desire and hope of serving a second mission in Maricopa Indian Branch, 321; photo with McMillians on day of departure from mission, **320**.

Chapter Eleven: Our Older Years: 1984 photo with Thelma, 322; diagnosed with prostate cancer, 323; begins radiation treatments in Ogden, 323; optimistic letter to Bernice Wright, 323; writes his 1981 "words cannot express" entry about Thelma, which summarizes their life together thus far, 324; Versal's penchant for sentimental gift giving, 325; gives Thelma new piano, 325; photo of piano, **326**; summarizes apparent talent of singing, 326; learned to play the harmonica by ear, 326; as next of kin is designated to handle settling estate of murdered niece, Carol Davis Elvin, 327; photo of Carol, **327**; in photo of graveside service attendees, **327**; discusses Thelma's ability to cut his hair, 328; progressive photos of his hair styles over the years, **328**; feeling better following radiation treatments, 328; making plans for summer of 1982, 328; friendship with Wesley and Thora Norton, 328; $122 trout story, 328; photo of Wesley Norton, **328**; Thelma catches 11 fish to Versal's 1, 330; Fisherman's ditty, **330**; Mom's account of a cold-but-peaceful day's fishing on Johnson Reservoir, 330; magazine photo of elderly couple fishing, **331**; has restless legs at night, 331; applies for another mission assignment, 332; repairs delivery truck at Ace Mill, 332; sees Dr. Daines for pre-mission physical, 332; makes final plan with Nortons for fishing trip, 332; Versal's account of his first heart attack, 332; teases nurses as recovery begins, 333; photo being wheeled out of hospital, **333**; compares his heart attack to his father's, 334; photo of his father, John Gould Davis, **334**; in Duane & Mel's wedding photo, **335**; in Deb & Trey's wedding photo, **335**; becomes empty nester, 335; news of Deb's new tumors sets him back physically and emotionally, 335; purchases new truck for fishing, 336; cancels deep-sea fishing trip due to ill health, 337; sees a back specialist 337; tries to develop patience during his physical struggles, 337; Thelma adjusts her schedule to his, 337; Thelma pays tribute to Versal's work ethic, 338; photo of demolished paint room at Ace Mill, **338**; Versal and Thelma's helplessness and distress in Logan following Deb's Texas tumor surgery, 339; photo with granddaughters Christine and Heather, **339**; gets in one last fishing trip before back surgery, 340; photo in tin boat, **340**; summary of back surgery, 341; summary of 8 hospitalizations in 15 months, 341; urged by Maricopa Branch president to serve second mission there, **342**; travels to Arizona for sealing of McMillan family in Mesa Temple, 342; in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**; visits Vel and Deb in Texas and Twila in Colorado, 343; participates in family prayer and priesthood blessing for Thelma, 343; agonizes over grim prognosis for Thelma, 343; photo by flowers on Seattle Temple grounds, **344**; prepares for another Alaska trip this time with the Virgins, 345; leaves for Alaska but returns early when Fern Virgin developes physical difficulties, 345; photo with Virgins, **345**; goes deep sea fishing with Virgins, 346; photo with red snapper, **346**; begins painting outside of Logan home when receives word of LaVel's heart attack, 347; drives to Texas for LaVel's open heart surgry, stays four days, then returns home for Thelma's chemotherapy treatments 348; flies to Texas for two week "therapy trip" to visit Vel and Deb's families, 348; receives compliment from Delta stewardess, 348; photo in Texas at Deb's house, **349**; diagnosed with sugar diabetes and begins treatments, 349; at odds with Thelma over another Alaska trip, 350; Thelma does an about face and supports the Alaska trip, 350; they take the three week Alaska trip with the Virgins, 351; photo of Thelma in British Columbia, **351**; camps out in hospital parking lot during Thelma's final surgery, 352; recounts President Gordon B. Hinckley's visit to Mom in hospital, 352; gently cares for Thelma as she loses 50 pounds and grows weaker, 352; chronicles Thelma's decline, 354; discovers bone cancer in his hip; 354; all five Davis sons converge to visit Thelma, 354; photo with five sons, **354**; participates in a family fast for Thelma's release, 355; kisses Mom goodbye, 355; records his feelings following Thelma's death, 356; in photo with children on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo with grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photo with children and spouses on day of Thema's funeral, **357**; composes tender letter to Thelma (deceased) on 7 Nov. 1986, 358; Deb paints portrait of Thelma for, **359**; photo of Thelma Deb paints from, **359**;

Chapter Twelve: Bessie and Me: photo on wedding day, **360**; lives in Logan home with Duane and Melanie following Thelma's death, 361; wraps up Thelma's records, 361; is aimless and fading with Thelma gone, 361; photo in Colorado on visit to Birds **361**; another photo on wedding day with Bessie, **362**; visits Birds in Colorado, 362; interest shown in Bessie Alvord, 362; marries Bessie on her 71st birthday, 362; Bird's neighbor mistakes Bessie for another Davis woman who is expecting a baby, 362; photo seated with Bessie on her back porch, **363**; praises Bessie for her inner strength, 364; in Alvord family photo, **365**; summarizes courtship with Bessie, 365; pays tribute to Bessie as "a fine woman," 366; traveles 4,000 miles on Amtrak to see family members around the country, 365; photo with Bessie by Amtrak train, **367**; bone cancer spreads, 367; begins botched Alaska trip with Bessie and another couple, 367; returns to Utah prematurely when his ill health and conflicts with fellow traveler become too strong, 367; Bessie travels on without him to see Alaska, 368; Bessie flies from Anchorage back to Utah, 368; summarizes home storage and fix-ups at Bessie's home in Logan, 369; recalls the ways home chores were done on the ranch in Idaho, 369; relates humorous account of using toilet cleaning rag to clean face in tub, 370; drawing of Versal in tub, **370**; photos of Versal and Bessie playing "Chubby Bunnies," **371**; writes of doctoring Bessie's cereal with salt, 371; writes of family's acceptance of Bessie, 371; is warmly accepted by Bessie's family, 371 teaches Tawny and Jenny lesson in gratitude, 372; photo of thank you note written by Jenny, **372**, has

prostate surgery, 373; relates humorous event regarding wearing of a diaper following prostate surgery, 373; contrasts gathering wood at ages 7 and 70, 373; in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**; misses Thelma's counsel on issues regarding their children, 375; fishing as therapy fades as his ability to load boats and prepare fishing equipment declines, 375; fishing becoming difficult because of the physical effort, 376; expresses frustration at physical inabilities, 376; becomes discouraged when watching Bessie mow lawn, 376; photo teaching Lyle and Travis how to cook fish, **376**; photo of Bessie and Versal relaxing on bed, **377**; sees Dr. Merrill Daines for heart pain, 377; Dr. Daines advises against second mission, 377; gives up plans for second mission, 377; ends doing odd jobs at Ace Mill, 377; summary of various excursions and road trips during their four years of marriage, 378; photo of Versal wearing Micky Mouse ears next to Bessie, **378**; visits his Idaho roots with Bessie and Trisha, 379; photo with Trisha, Damaris and Vernon, **379**; has two silly dreams, 380; describes Bessie's awakening at Bernice's house by a rooster, 381; in photo with Versal and Bernice, **381**; serves as president of local chapter of American Association of Retired Persons, 383; continues to sing at various functions, 383; lists types of music enjoys, 383; he and Bessie share love of singing and playing harmonica, 383; tells of startling waitress with trayload of dishes, 384; his health worsens but continues plans for another Alaska trip, 384; wonders about Thelma's state beyond the veil, 384; keeps Thelma's photo in bedroom and frequently visits grave, 384; has another heart attack, 384; family gathers when they think he is near death, 385; is hospitalized four times in 2 months, 385; in consideration of travel expenses he writes to family and asks them not to gather during his medical emergencies, 385; continues to cheat death a few more times, 396; family members travel to Logan to help care for him, 387; spends final weeks in Logan Valley Nursing Center, 387; is too ill and sedated to visit, 387; Twila and Deb take him for one last drive up Logan Canyon, 387; photo with Deb and Bessie in Logan Canyon, **387**; passes peacefully away on 13 Oct. 1989, 388; photos of his casket taken at grave dedication service, **388 & 389**; photo of newspaper obituary, **390**; photo of funeral program, **390**.

Chapter Thirteen: Reflections: 1974 photo of Versal and Thelma, **393**; 1977 "To All of Ours" letter, 394-396; "Church and final attitudes" journal entry, 397; 1984 photo of Versal and Thelma, **399**; Versal reflects on Thelma's ability to adapt during their 48 years together, 398; Thelma's thoughts on adapting and compromise, 399; Versal and Thelma's poignant, heart-felt letters written to each other as a method to work out a difficult, divisive issue in 1973, 400-403; 1972 photo of Versal and Thelma, **403**; Versal counsels his children on "A Matter of Finances," 404-405; photo of Versal and Bessie's home on West Center Street in Logan, **404-405**; Versal's 1988 "Reunion Address" to his children with counsel on living Christlike lives, 406-409; Versal's final "From the Mountain Top" letter to family members dated May 1989, 410-411; winter photo of Versal in Logan mountains, **410-411**.

Chapter Fourteen: The Life History of Versal LaVel Davis. Portion written in 1987: Deb's pencil drawing of Versal, **412**; watching his home burn, first childhood memory, 413; St. Anthony Canal home, 413; his father's construction of new home on Last Chance Property, 414; lives in home through child hood until 10 years after marriage, 414; describes family relationships during his childhood, 414; marital difficulties of two sisters, 414; childhood chores, 415; begins school at six, 415; riding in the "school wagon 415; praises Mrs. West, his first grade teacher 415; advances a half year in school twice, 416; childhood clothing described, 416; summer pasttimes recounted 416; his Mom gives him a lickin' on his bare hiney when swimming against her orders, 416-418; punish ments inflicted by his Dad with hand-picked "willers," 419; playing with Dutch in old Model T Ford, 420; playing with bicycle rims with Dutch, 421 description of first boat, a square, pine box, 421; playing in willow trees by river, 422; playing with Dutch in setty hen boxes, 422, dehorning, castrating, branding, and vaccinating cattle, 422; private rodeos, 423; playing "cowboys and Indians" with Dutch, 423; cookouts with Dutch, 424; overnight campouts on horses with Dutch, 425; trapping animals with Dutch, 425; sliding down snow-covered haystacks in winter, 425; summary of schools attended in St. Anthony, 425; first meeting Thelma in 4th grade, 426; was Thelma's classmate from 6th grade through junior year in high school, 426; drops out of school because needed at ranch, 426; tells of respect for Thelma as a teen, 427; tells of Thelma winning high school athletic/academic award all four years of high school, 427; explains obtaining firewood with his Dad for home use, 428; tells of lumbering with Floyd, 428; discusses spring cleaning of irrigation system and mending fences, 428; gives explanation of various ranch properties, 428; tells of father's responsibilities as watermaster of Dewey Canal, 429; he becomes watermaster after Gould's death, 429; tells of courting Thelma at Ricks, 430; discusses engagement and civil marriage, 430; shares ranch home with parents during early marriage years, 431; relates LaVel's birth during a snow storm, 431; Thelma assists with farming and cattle especially during war years, 432; myriad chores discussed 433 outlines use of horses and cattle dogs on the ranch, 433; involved in timber work with Floyd after the war, 433; explains his war classification, 434; steps up church work while on ranch, 435; becomes interested in scouting, 435; his involvement in dance programs, 435; opportunities to sing solo and in male quartet, 435; hunting and fishing discussed, 436; constructs boat for fishing, 436; develops interest in repairing automobiles, 436; obtains apprenticeship at Chevrolet dealership, 437; moves to St. Anthony when employed at new autobody shop, 437; works in three autobody shops in St. Anthony, 438; becames member of St Anthony Third Ward, 438; experiences as volunteer fireman, 438; has five children born to family. 438; makes decision to move to stronger academic, church-oriented community, 438; moves to Logan, Utah, 439 again active in scouting and church in Logan, 439; genealogical research becomes an interest, 440; outlines activity in acting, dancing, 440; tells of support for sons and daughter on missions, 440; fishing remains main hobby but hunting fades from interest 440; photography fills hunting void, 441; praises Thelma as traveling partner, 441; tribute to Thelma, 442; attitudes about church and testimony deepen as he gets older, 442, bears testimony. 443

Portion written ten years later, in 1987: apologizes for shaky handwriting, 444; outlines trips to Canada and Alaska, 444; mentions trips to Texas, Florida, northwest, and Colorado to visit children and their families, 445; discussion of Davis family tumors 445; tells of his and Thelma's service as missionaries in the Arizona Tempe Mission 445; health begins to fail while on mission, 446; he develops prostate cancer 446; has heart attack and develops arthritis, 446 Thelma's develops uterine cancer, 446; tells of Thelma's death in 1985. 447; writes of marriage to Bessie Alvord, 447; appreciates companionship with Bessie, 448; tells of scattered condition of family 448 has faith he'll be together with Thelma again, 448 gives all personal history materials to Twila, 449; fish ing and companionship gain importance during elderly years, 449; declining ability to load and unload boat 449; tells of trip to Mexico with Bessie 449 desires to go to Alaska again, 449; mentions Thelma's care of her mother 450; is only surveyor of his siblings 450; expresses tribute to Bessie, 450; relates state of finances 450; expresses love for Harlan Liggett and family 451; feels will soon be with Thelma 451

Chapter Fifteen: Supplemental Information plans for dispersal of earthly possessions before death, 453; distribution of possessions made following Thelma's funeral, 453; all genealogical family and personal history records given to Twila, 453; gives of portion of family records 452-453; Versal's extensive pedigree chart 454; Versal and Thelma's family group sheet 455; Versal and Thelma's four generation chart with photos 456-457; explanation of the Davis family tumors; his chart showing probable transmission of tumor genes in the Davis family 459; "Davis Family Tumor History" 460-461

Chapter Notes: regarding Versal's amended birth certificate, 462; Thelma's quote regarding Versal's "real" talents as a mechanic, 464; Versal discusses his mother's initial dislike of Thelma, 464 Versal tells of his mother's possessiveness of and "spoiling" of LaVel, 464; Floyd gives Versal work during transition between move from St. Anthony to Logan, 465;Ada Ostermiller describes St. Anthony's "Vets Units," which the Davis family lived in during transition months in 1952, 465; Versal describes batching it in Logan before family arrives 465; Thelma documents move to Logan in her day planner, 465 Thelma tells of weekly dance classes she and Versal teach, 465; Thelma relates intensity of pre-Gold-and-Green-ball rehearsals during subzero weather 466 Thelma describes fencing of back yard, 466; mill employees help Versal pour cement for new driveway 466 expresses wishes to go to Alaska 466 Bessie refuses to go 466 a description of the conflict between Versal and an Alaska traveling companion and the results for Bessie 466 Dad's opinion of "Expo '74" in Spokane, Washington 466 Versal writes about Bryce National Park 467 tells of his experience watching a beaver in a shallow pool near the Nevada River 467 Thelma relates another instance of Versal's antics with the grandchildren and great grandchildren 467 Versal's account of LaVel's crash landing in the snow near the Ubiokol airport in 1979 468 Thelma's account of her surprisingly negative reaction to their mission call and Versal's priesthood blessing to help her overcome it 468 Thelma's account of her surprisingly negative reaction to their mission call and Versal's priesthood blessing to help her overcome it 468 Versal records increasing heart problems 470 Versal relates his peace of mind despite family concerns 470 Versal expresses his appreciation to Lavel who had his own severe health problems for assistance on one of his last fishing trips 471 Versal's singing performances during his last year outlined 471

Davis Warren Corrette, calls Versal "Dark" 8 helps Versal with school 10; helps build Last Chance Home, 12; born in Millpond cabin, 12; takes Versal fishing, 16; swims in Last Chance Canal, 34; map showing location of ranch properties, 34; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; has friend who tutors Versal while Gould serves as doorkeeper in state legislature 43; in 1923 Davis family photo, 54-55 sends Versal a new rifle from the east 64 [illegible] in 1921 goes deep sea fishing with Versal, 236; photo during deep sea fishing trip, 237 Versal and Thelma visit in Arizona, 253; daughter Carol is murdered in Denver, 327; photo of Carol, 327; photo of graveside service attendees, 327

Davis, Warren Edgar, [illegible] lived with him as a young man, 6;

Davis, Wayne C., [illegible] Carol Davis Dietz, 327;

Davis, Whitley, [illegible] generations chart, 456-457

Dayton, Lester, [illegible] Anthony mule auction, Dec. 8, 436

Despain, Don, [illegible] 253

Dewey Canal, [illegible] used by Versal, 79; Versal becomes [illegible] 429; Thelma's quote regarding [illegible] spring cleaning of ditches and mending fences, 428; basis of father's responsibilities as watermaster of Dewey Canal, 429; he becomes watermaster after Gould's death, 429;

Dickenson, Roy, [illegible] following fire, 8

Dobson, Donald, [illegible] 383

Dobson, Scharlette. in 1957 study group photo, **181**

dogs, story of dog named "Wolf," 28; illustration of "Wolt at Midnight," **28**; the Ashton Dog Derby, 46; school system used to exterminate dog kennel, 46; Versal sics "Old Fritz"on Blaine Singleton, 84; stray dogs terriorize cattle, 104; Versal mistakenly kills his neighbor's cattle dog, 104; Ole Fritz one of best dogs owned by Versal, 104; Fritz attacks neighbor girl and has to be killed, 104 (see sequel 40 years later, 277); "Ring" described as good ranch dog, 105; photo of Ring, 105; Brownie described as good dog with children, 105; photo of Brownie, **105**; Brownie in 1945 family photo, **116**; family dog, Skippy, in 1960 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; Coalie's inclusion in 1974 Yukon River trip outlined, 216-223; 1974 Alaska photos of, **216-223**; Deb's drawings of Coalie in Alaska, 216-223; Malamutes in Alaska, 223; photo and drawings of Malamute, **223**; Coalie in photo with Deb, **243**; Deb and Versal's affection for Coalie , 258; the relationship of Coalie coming into heat and Versal's Sunday School teaching, 258; Coalie has 7 pups, 258; Coalie is spayed, 258; Versal's attentiveness when Coalie was dying of cancer, 258; photo of Versal's journal entry at Coalie's death, **258;** photo of Coalie with Deb, **257;** family gets new dog, Squeaky, 261; photo of Squeaky, **261**; Fritz, one of Versal's best ranch dogs, described, 104; has to shoot him when he bites neighbor girl, 104; chance meeting at MTC with girl (now an older missionary) who was bitten by Fritz 40 years earlier, 277; Maricopa Indian tradition claims dogs are "human," 281; Redbird family feeds and protects many dogs, 280; Dynamite, a dog who adopted Versal and Thelma on Indian reservation, 303; photo of Dynamite, **303**; cattle dogs used on ranch, 433; Thelma quotes Indian history book regarding belief in "dogs as persons," 468.

Dolan, Madeline. Warren's companion, 236.

Doolittle, Earl (Cliff). shop buddies join in successful Blacksmith Reservoir fishing trip, 237; shop employees engage in casting contest during fishing trip, 238; Thelma expresses respect for, 240; in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**; values Versal's skills and asks for help, 254.

Dutch. (see Caplinger, Warren)

Dye, Boyd. returned World War II soldier accidentally drowns in Island Park Reservoir, Versal saves his wife, 135; newspaper clipping of drowning, **137**.

dynamite. Versal describes using to remove lava formations, 32; blows-up lava rock sending it into neighbor's field, 141; photo of lava rock, **141**;

Dynamite (a dog). photo of, **303**; dog who adopted Versal and Thelma on Indian reservation, 303; bays during time when nerves are taut because of burlaries, 304; gives feeling of security, 305.

E

Economy Chevrolet. Versal serves as auto mechanic apprentice there, 147; photo of, **153**; works as repairman, 154; shown on map, **168-169**.

Egan Canal. Versal baptized in, 70.

Ellingson, Mrs. warms and comforts Burt family during 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 22.

Ellison, Dr. delivers LaVel during snowstorm, 101; cares for Gould at time of death, 120.

Elvin, Carol Davis. tragic death of in Denver, 327; photo of, **327**; graveside service of, 327; photo of service attendees, 327; buried near Warren in St. Anthony, 327

Erickson, Ashlyn. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Erickson, McKenna. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Eschleman, Verna Claire. visits Thelma following cancer surgery, 353.

Evans, Alyssa. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Evans, Ammon. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Evans, Peyton. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Everton, Don. in 1957 study group photo, **181**;

Everton, Donna. in 1957 study group photo, **181**.

F

Farley, Harold. in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**.

Farrell, Darrell F. dedication described, 278; in *Church News* photo about Maricopa Branch, **280**; Thelma and Versal stash valuable at his house following burglary at their trailer, 303; sleep at Farrell's home following buglaries 305; Versal values friendship of, 316.

Fenton, Harold. puts the rush on Thelma when she and Versal are courting, 89.

Fenton, Leslie. one of Thelma's old boyfriends.

Ferney, Helen. in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**.

First National Bank (in St. Anthony). had fire bell mounted on roof, photo of, **153**; shown on map, **168-169**.

fishing. Versal and Dutch catch suckers in Last Chance Canal, 66; photo of sucker, **66**; Versal and Dutch catch "red specks" on camping/fishing trip, 67; photo of "red speck," 67; weeklong fishing trip with Kellers and Prices to Yellowstone Park in 1941, 106 & 107; photos of 1941 Yellowstone fishing trip, **106 & 107**; Versal cited by game warden during Yellowstone fishing trip, 108; at Island Park Reservoir at time of drowning accident, 135; fishing for seagulls, 186; photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone, **186**; 1958 family fishing trip to Yellowstone, stories and photos **188 & 189**; Silver Anniversary fishing at Red Castle Lake in high Uintahs, 196; catching grayling in Alaska, 220; drawing of Versal catching grayling, **220**; 1972 trip to San Franscisco and deep sea fishing trip described, 236; deep sea fishing trips become annual affairs, 236; story of five bragging-size fish, 237; photo with two big trout, **237**; shop employees engage in casting contest during fishing trip, 238; good therapy following radiation treatments, 328; Wesley Norton's $122 trout story, 329; photo of Wesley Norton, **329**; Thelma catches 11 fish to Versal's 1, 330; Fisherman's ditty, **330**; Mom's account of a cold-but-peaceful day's fishing on Johnson Reservoir, 330; magazine photo of elderly couple fishing, **331**; 1983 deep sea fishing trip, 346; photo of Versal with red snapper, **346**; Ace Mill deep sea fishing trips discussed, 346; fishing as therapy fades as Versal's ability to load boats and prepare fishing equipment declines, 375; goes fishing with Reed Johnson, 375; fishing becomes difficult for Versal because of the physical effort, 376; photo of Versal teaching Lyle and Travis how to cook fish, **376**; description of first boat, a square, pine box, 421; playing in willow trees by river, 422; fishing remains main hobby but hunting fades from interest, 440; fishing and companionship important during elderly years, 449; declining ability to load and unload boat, 449

Versal expresses his appreciation to LaVel with his own severe health problems, for assistance on one of his last fishing trips, 471

Fleming, Myrtle. cares for Alice Davis during the last few years of her life, 148; photo of, **148**; Jay Loveland tells of Mrs. Fleming changing diapers and baking cookies, 464.

flipper. Versal describes how to make and use one, 61; drawing of, **61**; used to shoot chislers, 62.

Fonnsbeck, Deanna. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Fremont County Courthouse. shown on map, **168-16.**

Fritz. one of Versal's best ranch dogs, described, 104; has to shoot him when he bites neighbor girl, 104; chance meeting at MTC with girl (now an older missionary) who was bitten by Fritz 40 years earlier, 277.

Frodsham, Roy. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Froke, "Old Man" (Ed). Versal and friends steal potatoes from, 58.

G

gardening. Versal cuts down Siberian Elm and removes back lawn to put in garden, 203 (see also 256); gardening and food storage take on renewed emphasis during recession, 256; Michelle Davis tells of tender moment with Grandpa Davis in his pea patch, 256; photo of, **256**; part of Davis' 1982 planning, 328; Lauris relates memories of garden, 465.

genealogy. becomes important hobby for Versal, 231; initial reluctance to taking genealogy class, 232; outlines decades-long progression in genealogy involvement, 232; photos in Logan's genealogy library, **232**; remodels basement and creates "genealogy nook," 252; plunges into whole-heartedly when retires, 254; genealogical research becomes an interest, 440; definition of "The Spirit of Elijah," 467.

Gessell, Reed. in photo of Ace Mill Employees, **185**; fishing for seagulls in Yellowstone, 186; photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone, **186**.

Go-devil. description and drawing of, 14.

Groll, Sid. shop employees engage in casting contest during successful fishing trip, 238.

Gunnell, Dr. Don. in news article about Explorer river trips, **177**; eat soapy potatoes, 177.

H

Haderlie, Vivian. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Hall, Clifton. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**.

Hall, Jick. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**; shown on map, **168-169**; dies just before Christmas 1958, 191; photo of funeral spray among Christmas decorations, **190**, in photo with Ruby, **267**; Versal pays tribute to, 267; Thelma recalls her father's priesthood blessing after she drank paint thinner, 343 (also see chapter note, 470);is witness at Versal and Thelma's civil marriage, 430; Thelma's account of drinking turpentine as a child and her miraculous recovery following her father's priesthood blessing, 470

Hall, Keith. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**; Versal assists in building houseboat, 328.

Hall, Nola. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**

Hall, Rada. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**.

Hall, Ray. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**.

Hall, Ruby Birch. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**; photo with Thelma and baby Tamara, **164**; shown on map, **168-169**; in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family, **233**; Corette assists in her care, 246; high gas prices limit travel, a factor in Thelma not notifying family members regarding her mother's funeral, 256; in 1979 five generation photo, **264**; summary of six years living with Versal and Thelma in Logan, 266; in four generation photo, **266**; Versal's tribute to, 267; photo with Jick, **267**; known for her chicken and noodles, 267.

Hall, Ruth. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**.

Hall, Thelma. (see Davis, Thelma Hall)

Hall, Wayne. in Jick & Ruby Hall family photo, **135**.

Hammond, Marie. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Hansen, Brandon. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Hansen, Christopher. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Hansen, John. in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**.

Hansen, Justin. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Hansen, Mia. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Hansen, Robert. goes on snowmobile excursion with Duane, Melanie, and Laureen; 325.

Hanson, Autumn. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Hanson, Crystal. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Hanson, Joshua. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Hanson, Lorin. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Hanson, Marianne. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

harmonica. Versal learns to play "by ear," 326. Bessie and Versal share love of singing and playing harmonica, 383.

Harris, Ev. partner at Ace Mill and Construction Company, 182, news article about, **182**, is startled by pipe bomb, 183, fishing for seagulls in Yellowstone 186; photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone, **186**. in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**. still calls Versal for work following retirement and heart attack, 338; Ace Mill deep sea fishing trips discussed, 346; in photo on deep sea fishing trip, **347**

harvesting. Versal describes, **78**

haying. described, 30; photos **30 & 31**

Heward, Joe. helps administer to Brian after his birth — two accounts, 126 & 463.

Hill, Richard. Thelma begins taking piano lessons from, 325; Thelma tells of his diligence as assistant dance instructor during intensity of pre-Gold-and-Green-ball rehearsals during subzero weather, 466.

Hills, George. humorously mistakes Bessie for another Davis woman who is expecting a baby, 362.

Hinckley, President Gordon B. visits Thelma in hospital room at time of his own wife's hospitalization, 352.

Holman, Reidar. in photo of Ace Mill Employees **185**; elk hunts with Versal, 198; included in Alaska excursions summary, 209; 1966 caribou and moose hunting trip summarized, 211-215; photo of Reidar Holman dressing caribou carcass, **211**; photo of shot ptarmigan, **211**; in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees **253**.

Holmes, Dave. gives mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to ward member who collapses in church, 249.

horses. "Old Flora", mare used as derrick horse during haying, 30; Versal puts tongue on horse bit, 36; "Babe" and "Tess", p. 36; Versal and Dutch ride 'Ol Prince and Ginger on camping trip, 67; harnesses before collecting fast offerings, 71; Bally, Old Rock & Nig pull wagon on logging trip, 71. Buck and Tess wade into Snake River with wagonload of dam repair supplies, 74; Versal brands Tess and Bally, 77; drawing of bucking branded horse, **77**; use of horse teams during harvesting, 78; nose bags for, 79; pests afflice horses, 79; Versal breaks Tess to use as a draft horse, 80. Old Babe (Tess' mother) used to help break Tess, 80. photo of Gould with Flora, Floss, Queen, and Sullivan **81**; Buck and Tess drag doctor's car through snowdrifts following LaVel's birth, 101; describes various uses of horses on ranch, 112; photo of Versal with Old Buck, **112**; names best ranch horse teams: Rock and Nig, Dan and Bolly, Queen and Flossie, Babe and Flora, 113; describes Old Jyp's abilities in roping steers, 113. use of horses on the ranch, 433

Houser, Blanche. in 1957 study group photo, **181**

Houser, Herman. in news article about Explorer river trips, **177**. in 1957 study group photo **181**

Howard, Jenniter. in Alvord family photo, **365**

Howard, Joanne Alvord. in Alvord family photo **365**

Howard, Loy. saves Versal from being crushed to death by car, 151

Howard, Mark. in Alvord family photo, **365**

Howard, Mrs. nurse present at Brian's birth — two accounts, 126 & 463.

Howard, Nathan Bessie's grandson, in Alvord family photo **365**

hunting. Versal describes, kill with a .44 rifle, 16; shooting rabbits and chasing, 64; in your dreams, photo, **159**; describes pursuit, retrieval of deer, great buck, 160; describes second deer hunt, 160; photo of bull elk, **161**; Versal's experiment with guns and reloading, 162; hunting rabbits with Al Schnurle, 162; Al Schnurle shoots a hole through his hand, 163; various trips summarized and detailed, 197; photos, **197**; attitude towards killing animals changes as he matures, 198; deer hunting and moose hunting trip summarized, 211-215; photo of Reidar Holman dressing caribou carcass, 211; photo of shot ptarmigan, **211**; Versal describes how hunting habits in Oquirrh Mountains, 231; hiking, carrying meat home, but hunting solo from interest, 440; photographs this hunting trip, 441

I

ice caves. description of, 163.

ice cream. making of, 95; photo of, **95**

ice gorge. story of 1927 tragedy, 20-23; photos of, 22

ice skating. Versal is injured skating on East Jordan Canal, 51; drawing of skating accident location, 52; photo of skating accident location, 53

Idaho Auto Body. location of Versal's first paint repair job, 147; refurnished auto is stolen from, 150

Idaho State Capitol Building. Gould serves as doorkeeper for legislature, 45; photo of, **45**

Indians. camped near ranch each summer, 27

Indian superstition. dogs are "unclean," 281 & 281; many items are heaped on a dead person's possessions so he can take them as gifts to other deceased loved ones who have gone ahead, 288; a dead person's possessions must be removed and his home rearranged so his spirit will be disoriented but encouraged to leave, 289; Bobbi Knott tells of many superstitions, 297

Ingold, Bruno. in photo of Ace Mill Employees, **185**; fishing for seagulls in Yellowstone, 186; photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone, **186**

Island Park. drowning tragedy in town is described, 135; newspaper clipping of drowning, 137

J

Janis, Stanley. tells of Indian "superstitions" about dead and robbed hens and his wife, 303

Jenkins, Brother. baptizes Versal, 59.

Jensen, Cliff. has heart attack in church and dies, 249

Jensen, Duane visits Thelma during her cancer surgery, 353; makes wooden plaque for President Hinckley, 353

Jensen, Harvey. worked with Versal at Utah Power & Light, photos by car, **150 & 151**

Jeppson, Earl. shop employee engaged in coming, rumor stating fishing trip, 238; in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, 253; unemployed, visits Ace Mill, reminisces with Versal, 338; photo of Earl's home, school, paint room, 338

Jeppson, Mike. shop employee engaged in coming, rumor stating fishing trip, 238

Johansen, Sven originally included in Ann Arnold map, Photo of, 211

Johnson, Chelsea. listed in Versal and Thelma's 456 generation chart, **456-457**

Johnson, Davis. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Johnson, Dr. arranges for Thelma's chemotherapy treatment, 349; Thelma's CT scans and Dr. Johnson's explanation of Thelma's CT scans, 350; his comments on Thelma's positive results, 360

Johnson, Jim friendship with Versal, 9; sponsored

Johnson, Reed. [illegible] hoists co-[illegible] with crane, 184; photo of, 184; crane photo, 184; uses crane to remove Siberian Elm logs from back yard, 203; quick reflexes avert disaster when Versal rides crane "headache ball," 234; news photo showing him operating crane, **235**; photo using crane to repair Logan Temple, **235**; hoists Versal and Laurie into air inside crane cage, 236; jest about neck tie indirectly leads to Versal's humiliation but results in mission call, 269-271; photo of, **270**; goes fishing with Versal, 375; another fishing trip with Versal, 375; shared many hours with Versal, 449.

Johnson, Tamasin. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Johnson, Trevor. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Jones, Brent. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

July 4 holiday. described, 19.

K

Karren, Steve. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Keefer Park. shown on map, **168-169**.

Keller, Lowell. helps Versal steal ice cream from Thelma's dorm mates at Ricks, 83; with Davises on weeklong trip to Yellowstone Park in 1941, 106 & 107; photos of Yellowstone trip, **106 & 107**; with Versal when he was cited by game warden during Yellowstone fishing trip, 108; dies before serving planned mission, Versal given his new suit; 274; photo of, 275.

Keller, Zola. with Davises on weeklong trip to Yellowstone Park in 1941, 106 & 107; photos of Yellowstone trip, **106 & 107**; Versal accepts suit from Zola Keller, 274; photos of Lowell and Zola Keller, **275**.

Kemp, David. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Kennedy, Mrs. strips milk from cat in milk container, 24; illustration of cat and cream story, **24**.

Kimball, Spencer W. rededicates newly renovated Logan Temple, 264; speaks at Logan Temple dedicatory services attended by Davis family members, 264.

Kisto, Bobby. One of Versal and Thelma's investigators, 294; teaching of outlined, 297; tells of many superstitions, 297.

Kofoed, Leslie. played in tree house, 202.

Kofoed, Wendell. gives Versal good deal on camera, 231.

Koori, Brother (deceased Indian). Versal speaks about the Plan of Salvation at his wake, 306.

L

Last Chance Canal. drawing showing location of, **12**; Davis ranch home named after, 12; Indians camp near, 27; Versal learns to swim in, 34; Versal ice skates on, 51; drawing of skating accident location, **52**; photo of skating accident location, **53**; Versal and Dutch catch suckers in, 66; 2008 photo of fences and Last Chance Canal, **69**; Davis property named after, 94.

lava rock. photo of, **33**; removed using dynamite, 32, 33; Versal and Dutch climb lava cliffs, 50; blows up lava rock sending it into neighbor's field, **141**; photo of lava rock, **141**.

Laveen Country Store. photo of, 282; location of confrontation between proud Indian woman and Thelma, 282.

Leimer, Axel (Aki). listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Leimer, Christian. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Leimer, Jessica. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Leimer, Natasha. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Leimer, Stefan. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Lincoln School. describes rivalry between "southsiders" and "northsiders," 41; map showing north and south division in St. Anthony, **41**; photo of, **42**; shown on map, **168-169**.

linoleum. excited about installation in the ranch home in 1940s, 98; photo of, **98**.

long johns. Versal is sewn into his, 16.

Logan Canyon. photo, **378**; view of Wellsville Mountains from mountains above Logan, **406-407**; photo of Third Dam up Logan Canyon, **408-409**; photo of Versal in mountains of Cache National Forest, **410-411**.

Logan First Ward. Davis family participation in described, 248; exterior and interior photos of church building, **248**; begins block schedule, 257; Thelma records Logan First Ward Relief Society history, 353.

Logan home. interior and exterior described, 170; 1952 photo of, **170**; photo of pouring cement for new driveway, **200**; photo of framed garage, **201**; description of kid-friendly trees, 202; photo Siberian Elm tree, **202**; photo of tree house in box elder tree, **203**; large 1967 photo, **204-205**; small 2011 photo, **205**; large 1965 winter photo, **392-393**; large winter photo of weeping willows by canal, **394-395**; large winter photo looking east down our street towards Logan Peak, **396-397**; large winter view looking across the street from our Logan home, **398-399**; Lauris relates memories of — garden, basement steps, upstairs bedroom, "water day" on the back lawn, 465; Thelma describes fencing of back yard, 466.

Logan Temple. photo of repair work being done, **235**; 1970s renovation of temple described, 264; Versal is usher at Logan Temple dedication services, 264; is called as Temple baptistry worker, 264; his night photo of Logan Temple, **265**; Spencer W. Kimball rededicates, 265; Dad's photo of, **397**.

Lola Young (83-year-old matriarch) of five families. allows Davises into home and agrees to further gospel discussions then gives them the brush off, 308.

Lola Young Gang. Versal and Thelma target proselyting efforts at, 307; efforts proselyting among summarized, 307; map showing location of, **308**.

Loveland, Charles Bertrum (Bert). in 1919 family portrait, **11**; Versal and Dutch ignite dynamite cap in his field, 53; in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**; gives Brian blessing at birth, 126 (see also 463); spends Thanksgiving 1980 at Dean Davis' home with Versal and Thelma, 181; Versal, Bessie and Trisha visit in 1988, 379; is in one of Versal's silly dreams, 380; photo with Vera, **380**; passes away on 29 Oct. 1988, 380.

Loveland, Cleova. writes of her grandmother Alice Davis' death, 148.

Loveland, Dorothy. was one of her Grandmother Alice Davis' "favorites," 463.

Loveland, Helen. in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, 327.

Loveland, Jay. tells of his grandmother Alice Davis' personality change before her death, 148; in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, 327; tells of his grandmother Davis "playing favorites" by bringing gifts to him and ignoring his brother when they were both ill, 463; tells of Mrs. Fleming changing diapers and baking cookies, 464.

Loveland, Orville. helps Versal steal soda from Venice Dance Hall, 56; goes on chickoree with Dutch and Versal, 58.

Loveland, Vera Jane Davis. in 1919 family portrait, **11**; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**; cares for her mother before her death, 148; accompanies Floyd and Versal's singing performances on piano, 155; spends Thanksgiving 1980 at Dean Davis' home with Versal and Thelma, 181; photo with Versal, **281**; Versal, Bessie and Trisha visit in 1988, 379; photo with Bert, **380**; passes away on 18 Nov. 1987, 380; assists with LaVel's birth during a snow storm, 431.

M

Macfarlane, Frank. in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**.

Macfarlane, Leatha Davis (Shosted). 1918 photo with baby Nina, **4**; moves into ranch home with her four young girls, 10; in 1919 family portrait, **11**; born in Millpond cabin, 12; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**.

Mack, Eric. is a brother in the Mack Gang, has Thanksgiving dinner at Davises, 313.

Mack Gang. Versal confronts after they steal his welder, 313.

Mack, Joey. ia brother in the Mack Gang, is confronted by Versal regarding theft of welder, 313; Thanksgiving dinner at Davises, 313.

Mack, Rachel. in *Church News* photo accompanying article about Maricopa Branch, **280**.

Mack, Robin. is a brother in the Mack Gang, borrows Versals car repair manual, 313; is confronted by Versal regarding theft of welder, 313; has Thanksgiving dinner at Davises, 313.

Mack, Shawn. is in *Church News* photo accompanying article about Maricopa Branch, **280**.

Mack, Valerie Stokes. is Mack gang member's wife, has Thanksgiving dinner at Davises, 313.

Maines, Flo. lived near Burt family during 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 21.

Malinda Card Gang. Versal and Thelma target proselyting efforts at, 307; beat Mexican farm worker, 313.

Mangum, Cecil and Edith. ran the boarding

house Thelma lived in while she taught school in Teton Basin, 88.

Marler, Evelyn. in 1957 study group photo, **181**.

Marler, Reed. in 1957 study group photo, **181**.

Maricopa Indian Branch. map showing location of, **278**; statistics, 278; first impressions, 279; photo of church house and trailer, **279**; map showing general home distribution near church house, **285**; string of burglaries on reservation outlined, 301-305; photo of mission trailer and Versal's Toyota, **311**; branch conference summarized, 312; called the "Maricopa Twig" by Phoenix Stake President Kent Turley, 312.

Maricopa Indians. map showing location of, **278**; statistics, 278; first impressions, 279; proud Indian woman confronts Thelma then becomes friendly, 282; reticence of, 300; Versal and Thema's struggle to gain acceptance among, 300; call Versal "Bald Eagle" and Thelma "Cotton Top," 300; string of burglaries on reservation outlined, 301-305; photo of Head Start program for the Indian children, **302**; Thelma feels colony is being destroyed from within, 305; 20 burglaries outlined at community meeting, 307; look down on Mexicans, 315; racial tensions described, 315; Thelma quotes Indian history book regarding believe in "dogs as persons," 468.

Marshall, Roxy. counsels Thelma to support Versal in his Alaska obsession even if it brings about his death, 350.

Martinez, Lisa. wonders why Versal is bald, 300.

Mathews, Elmer. Rula Murri's boyfriend, 85.

McCallister, Devere. spends several days working through humiliating lesson in pride with Versal, 269-271; calls him on mission, 217; photo of, **271**; Versal and Thelma reflect on his setting apart blessing during string of burglaries, 305; tells Versal a second mission to the Maricopa Indian Colony may be possible, 342.

McAllister, Wilford. in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**.

McMillan, Delora. in McMillan family photo, **286**; in photo, **299**; sealed as family in May 1983, 321; in photo with Davises on day of departure from mission, **320**; sealed as family in Mesa Temple, 342, in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**.

McMillan, Hansel (Red). photo of trailer, **283**; one of Versal and Thelma's investigators, 294; teaching progress outlined, 295-297; photo of family, **296**; baptized, 299; photo on baptism day, **299**; Versal and Thelma feel safer with them living nearby following string of burglaries, 303; hired as security guard at Pee Posh Community Center, 305; leaves his family, 309; returns to family, 309, 10 chickens die in heat, 314, won't allow children to swim in Pee Posh "ditch pool," 314; sealed as family in May 1983, 321; in photo with Davises on day of departure from mission, **320**; sealed as family in Mesa Temple, 342, in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**.

McMillan, Jacinda. in McMillan family photo, **286** sealed as family in May 1983, 321; in photo with Davises on day of departure from mission, **320**, sealed as family in Mesa Temple, 342, in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**.

McMillan, Lennidine. photo of trailer, **283**; one of Versal and Thelma's investigators, 294; teaching progress outlined, 295-297, photo of family, **296**, baptized, 299, photo on baptism day, **299**, Versal and Thelma feel safer with them living nearby following string of burglaries, 303; worried about reaction to Versal speaking at wake, 306; is in a drunken stupor after Red leaves home, 309; sealed as family in May 1983, 321; in photo with Davises on day of departure from mission, **320**; sealed as family in Mesa Temple, 342, in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**

McPherson, Don. in 1957 study group photo, **181**.

McPherson, Nelda. in 1957 study group photo, **181**.

Medicine Men. still powerful on Maricopa reservation, 298; information about, 298; use peyote to "get the bad out," 298.

Meickle, Pat. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Millpond. drawing showing location of, **12**; location of ice gorge tragedy, 20-23.

Millpond cabin. drawing showing location of, **12**; involved in ice gorge tragedy, 20-23; photos of, **22**; description of Gould & Alice's years living there, 23.

Miller, Doc. pulls Versal's wisdom tooth but resulting infection produces lock jaw, 154

Minkler, Dorothy. (see Davis, Dorothy Minkler)

Mobley, Dr. diagnoses Versal's prostate cancer, 319.

Monohan, Theresa. teacher at all-Indian Presbyterian Church, and Head Start teacher, 310; begins discussions with Thelma and Versal, 310; discussions end when Davises have to return to Utah, 311.

moose. Alaska caribou and moose hunting trip outlined, 210-215; encounters in 1974 Alaska trip, 219; drawing of, **219**

Morgan, Leona. in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**.

Mormon Crickets (17-year cicadas). infestation of 96; photos of, 96.

Mortenson, Dr. performs hysterectomy on Thelma, 343

mosquitos. homemade mosquito repellant, p. 50 abundance of in Alaska, 218; NoSeeUms described 220

motorcycles. Versal describes his one day motor cycle, 82, photo of motorcycle 82

mules. characteristics of, 37; "Ole Peter" the Davis crafty mule, 37; photo of mule, **37**.

Murri, Blaine. was with Versal when he was cited by game warden during Yellowstone fishing trip 108

Murri, Lois. helps Versal and Thelma steal ice cream (they thought) from dorm room, 83; good friend of Thelma's in college 87

Murri, Maeda. a close friend of Thelma's in college photo of 87

Murri, Rula. goes to movie with Thelma and Versal 85

muskrats. Versal and Pat trap dozens during ranch years 108; photo of **109** muskrats described, 109; photo of ranch log showing numbers of muskrats killed 109

N

Navakuku, Ron Maricopa Indian leader [illegible] with Versal's commitment to [illegible] meeting, 307; gives time for Davises to say goodbye at community meeting, 321; gives Versal big bear hug, 321.

Naylor, Russ. in photo of Ace Mill Employees, **185**, fishing for seagulls in Yellowstone, 186; in photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone **186** in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**

Neeley, Lynn. treats Versal and Thelma to crabbing expedition, 260.

Nelson, Anna. in 1986 VLD reunion photos at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**

Nelson, Debra Davis. illustrates Flashbacks for her father with birth of, 180; writes of her childhood 180; photo with parents, **180**; in photos of 1968 Yellowstone trip **188 & 189** in 1985 family Christmas photos **190 & 191** in 1986 V. L. Davis family photo, **192**; included in Alaska excursions summary, 208; 1974 Yukon River trip outlined, 216-223; 1974 Alaska photos of, **216-223** in 1969 Easter photo of VLD family **233**; 1972 trip to San Franscisco and deep sea fishing trip described, 236; story of five dragging anchor, 237; present when shop employees engage in reading contest on fishing trip 238; talks at idea of moving to Mendon 241; begins lifelong battle with Davis family tumors, 243; photo showing affects of tumor surgery, **243**; photo of handwritten poem about her father's love during tumor surgeries **243**; in 1975 Davis family photos, **244 & 245**; helps care for Grandma Hall, 246; has special relationship with Coosie, 246; prepares for mission 247; pre-mission photo **247**; dates Richard Sommers 247; called to Arcadia California Mission, 247; Deb and Versal's affection for Coalie, 248; Coalie comes into heat and has 7 pups, 258; Versal's protectiveness to Coalie when she was dying of cancer, 258; photo of Versal's journal entry at Coalie's death, 258; photo with Coalie, **257**; helps take care of Grandma Hall and house while parents go to Canada, 260; paints deer-in-moonlight on velvet picture as a surprise for Dad, 261; photo of painting, 261; gets new dog, Squeaky, 261; photo of Squeaky, **261** becomes engaged, 328; wedding photo of, **335**; discovers new tumors during honeymoon, 335; heads to Texas to begin marriage with Trey, 335; in photo packing wedding gifts for trip back to Texas **336**; Texas tumor surgery summarized, 339; surgery recovery miserable and lonely, 339; Versal and Thelma's helplessness and distress back in Logan following Deb's surgery, 339; assists Colleen at time of LaVell's heart attack in Texas, 347; in photo with parents and Rachel at her home in Texas, **349**; flies from Texas to care for Thelma, 350 & 351; participates in a family Easter for Thelma's sake, 351; was present at Thelma's passing, 355; in family photo with Versal on day of Thelma's funeral, **356**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in photo of Davis children and their spouses on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; plans for [illegible] acrylic portrait of Thelma, 359; plans [illegible] Thelma's poem at [illegible], 359; in 1986 VLD reunion photo at Grand Lake, Colorado, **374**; agrees to sell land to help care for Versal, 387; in photo at [illegible] and Bessie, **388**; helps divide Mama Ann's possessions after her death, 387; in photo at cemetery on day of Mama's funeral, **388 389**; in photo of extended Davis family on day of Versal's funeral, **390**; [illegible] Versal, **412**; in photo at Bessie and Charles' 50th anniversary party, **436-437**; [illegible] surgery, **460**; [illegible] Deb's opinion of, **Page 34**; in Spokane, Washington, for

Nelson, Dr. Versal examines for [illegible] trip in 1974 for tumors, 210; treatment of Versal's back tumors, 343

Nelson, Herman Clements III (Trey). [illegible] engaged to Deb, 328; wedding photo of, **335**; [illegible] back to Texas with Deb, 335; [illegible] wedding gifts for trip back to Texas, **336**; [illegible] in [illegible] to be pregnant, 339; [illegible] Texas, 347; [illegible] Thelma's sickness, 350; [illegible] Thelma's funeral, 355; [illegible]

Thelma's parents, 357; nephew of Davis children and [illegible] 357; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Nelson, Irma. makes centerpiece for Versal in roadshow, 284.

Nelson, Louise. in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**.

Nelson, Rachel. in photo at home in Texas with her mother and Davis grandparents, **349**; in photo of Davis grandchildren on day of Thelma's funeral, **357**; in 1986 VLD reunion at Grand Lake, Colorado photo, **374**; in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Nelson, Sister. in 1966 mother-daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**.

Nelson, Vanessa. in photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Nielsen, Chaselyn. is listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Nielson, Dave. his car is hoisted into air with crane as practical joke, 184, values Versal's skills and asks for help, 254.

Nielsen, Gessell. photo of, **184**.

Nielsen, Karen Alvord. is shown in Alvord family photo, **365**.

Nielsen, Mark. absent from photo, **365**.

Nielsen, Merrill. absent from photo, **365**.

Neilsen, Travis. is listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Norton, Thora. is in $122 trout story, 329; photo of Wesley Norton, **329**; friendship with the Davises summarized, 329; goes fishing with Davises following Dad's heart attack, 336; visits Thelma following her cancer surgery, 353.

Norton, Wesley. calls Versal as counselor in bishopric, 249; news photo of bishopric, **249**; $122 trout story, 329; photo of Wesley Norton, **329**; friendship with the Davises summarized, 329; goes on overnight fishing trip with Davises following Dad's heart attack, 336.

O

O'Brien, Camille. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

O'Brien, Cory. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Olsen, Agnes. in 1941 extended Davis family photo, **117**.

Olsen, Albert. in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; 1946 photo with string of fish, **67**; one of Versal's frequent deer hunting companions, 160.

Olsen, Bernice. (see Wright, Bernice Caplinger)

Olsen, Corette. (see Spence, Corette Olsen)

Olsen, Damaris. (see Clark, Damaris Olsen)

Olsen, Henry. in 1919 family portrait, **11**; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; 1918 photo of, **56**; works as janitor at Venice Dance Hall, 56; in 1941 extended Davis family photo, **117**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**.

Olsen, Lynn. in 1959 pheasant hunting photo, **197**; helps rescue family fishermen on trip where the van is "baptized," 263; Lyle's painting of van, **263**, photo of Lauris sitting by van, **263**.

Olsen, Merle. flies to Texas to help following LaVel's heart attack, 347; in photos at cemetery on day of Versal's funeral, **388-389**.

Olsen, Merlie Damaris Davis (Swainston, Caplinger). photo from her Book of Remembrance, **4**; taught Versal in Primary, 10 & 56; in 1919 family portrait, **11**, lived on Upper Ranch with Henry Olsen, 12, in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; 1911 photo of, **47**, 1918 photo of, **56**; unhappy marriages, 56, in 1941 extended Davis family photo, **117**; in 1941 Davis family photo, **119**.

Olsen, Nellie. attends BYU Education Week with Thelma and Versal, 254.

Orlob, Milton. sells Versal motorcycle while he's in high school, 82.

Orlob, William. tells Versal about motorcycle his brother wants to sell, 82.

Ostermiller, George and Ada. purchase home used as St. Anthony Third Ward chapel, 156; 2010 photo of home, **156**; Ada describes St. Anthony's "Vets Units," 465;

Outhouses. Versal's drawing and description of, 14.

P

Packer, Florence. helps warm and comfort Burt family during 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 22-23; photo of home, **22**.

Parke, Val. counsels Davises to return to Utah for treatment of Versal's prostate cancer, 319; gives Davises an honorable release, 319.

Parrish, Treva. in 1957 study group photo, **181**; visits Thelma following her cancer surgery, 353.

Parrish, Wallace. in 1957 study group photo, **181**; visits Thelma following her cancer surgery, 353.

peas. cash crop in Upper Snake River Valley, 49; Gould grows, 49; photo of Gould in pea field, **49**; Dutch and Versal gorge on, 49.

Pee Posh Community Center. photo of, **283**; photo of community pool, **314**.

Perry, L. Tom (of the Quorum of Twelve). speaks at Logan Temple dedicatory services attended by Davis family members, 264.

Peterson, Barbara. she and Dad make poor traveling companion on Alaska excursion, 367.

Peterson, Joelle. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Peterson, Nick. begins trip to Alaska with wife and Davises but Versal returns to Utah when he and Nick's wife don't get along, 367; the Petersons go on to Alaska taking Bessie with them, 368.

Peterson, Quinn. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Peterson, Riley. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Peterson, Taren. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

photography. becomes important hobby for Versal, 231; photo in dark room, **231**; remodels basement and creates a "genealogy nook," 252; increases time spent doing photography and genealogy during semi-retirement, 254; photography fills hunting void, 441.

pigs. Versal spears one with pitch fork, 20; Versal lassos one, 64; drawing of lassoed pig, **65**;

potatoes. growing and harvesting described, 110; photos of, **110 & 111**.

Prado, Manual. photo with Versal, **315**; family not accepted by Indians, who look down on Mexicans, 315; faithful and capable, 315.

Price, Austin. with Davises on weeklong trip to Yellowstone Park in 1941, 106 & 107; photos of Yellowstone trip, **106 & 107**.

Price, Rula. with Davises on weeklong trip to Yellowstone Park in 1941, 106 & 107; photos of Yellowstone trip, **106 & 107**.

Q

R

radios. decription of Atwater Kent radio, 18 & 82; improvising car radio with wire connected to barbed wire fence, 82.

Ramsbottom, Ray. in news article about Explorer river trips, **177**.

Raymond, Ace. owner of Ace Mill and Construction, 182; news article about, **182**; is startled by pipe bomb, 183.

Redbird, Carroll. Thelma and Versal attend his wake, 286.

Redbird, Gaylurd. home described, 280; many animals including mass of dogs, 280; believes in Indian tradition that dogs are "human", 281; Thelma quotes Indian history book regarding belief in "dogs as persons," 468.

Redbird, Jeannette. in *Church News* photo, which accompanies article about Maricopa Branch, **280**; in photo with Ringleros, **295**.

Redbird Pit Bunch. described, 283; Indian home near mission trailer where many illegal and distasteful activities are in full view, 283; photo of Redbird Pit shack, **283**; Malinda Card is matriarch of, 308; aid and abet Lennadine McMillan's drunken reaction to her husband's desertion, 309; map showing location of clan, **309**; Thelma sadden by vices among, 309.

Redbird, Roy. in *Church News* photo, which accompanies article about Maricopa Branch, **280**;

Redbird, Wilma. sole active adult in branch, 279; complicated spiritual struggles of, 279; Church News photo of, **280**; home described, 280; many animals including mass of dogs, 280; Indian tradition — dogs "human", 281; takes children to medicine men, 298; living in open polygamy, 311; only adult Indian initially present at branch conference, 312; arrogantly rejects Manual Prados offer to pick her up for church, 315; tells Davises Indians were pleased when they danced at the Chicken Scratch party, 317.

Rich, Clayton. in 1945 potato harvesting photo, **111**

Richards, Elder LeGrand. dedicates St. Anthony Third Ward home used as chapel, 156

Richardson, Sharon. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Richman, Nessie a close friend of Thelma's in college, photo of **87**.

Ricks College. Thelma attends, 87, photo of, 87; photo of Versal's signature in Thelma's college yearbook, **88**.

Rigby, Lynne. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Rigby, Margo. assists ward member who has heart attack and collapses in church, 249.

Ringlero, Debra. one of Versal and Thelma's first investigators, 294; teaching progress outlined, 294-295; photo, **295**; discusses Medicine men, 298; baptized, 299; photo on baptism day, **299**; interested in Versal's baldness, 300.

Ringlero, Tony. less-active husband of Debra, one of Thelma and Versal's first investigators, 294; teaching progress outlined, 294-295; photo, **295**.

Ritchie, Connor. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Ritchie, Noah. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Ritchie, Shelby. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Riverview Cemetery. Gould served on St. Anthony Cemetery board, 6; infant David Burt buried there after 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 23; photo of Alice on her and Gould's double headstone, **120**.

Roberts, Trist. in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**; nostalgically views Ace Mill demolition with Versal, 338; photo of Dad's demolished paint room, **338**.

rodeos. Versal describes neighborhood rodeos, 80.

Rogers, Paul. in 1977 photo of Ace Mill workers, **253**.

Roller, Tanner. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Romney, Marion G. conducts Logan Temple dedictory session attended by Davis family, 267.

Ruiz, Randy. expresses how difficult it is to meet strange whites, 300; tells master of ceremonies at wake Versal would like to speak, 306

Rydalch, James. saves Versal from freezing to death during elk hunt, 138

S

sage hens. plentiful on ranch, 97; photo of, 97 Versal hunted for food, 97

sand dunes. description of, 163

Saulala, Anasualu. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Saulala, Cumorah. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Saulala, Huafa. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Saulala, Ilisapeti. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Saulala, Lataisia. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Saulala, Mosiah. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Saunders, Carrie. in 1957 study group photo, **181**

Saunders, Gilbert. in 1957 study group photo, **181**.

Schenk, Fred. in photo of Ace Mill Employees, **185**.

Schnurle, Al. goes rabbit hunting with Versal, **162** shoots a home through his hand, 162.

school. Versal describes schooling at Central School, 38; in 1924 3rd grade photo, **39**; Veresal describes riding in school wagon after its use as a temporary kennel for dogs, 40; description of school wagon and sleigh, 40; photo of school sleigh, **40**. drawings of school wagons, **40**; describes rivalry between "southsiders" and "northsiders," 41 & 42; map showing north and south division in St. Anthony, **41**; Versal tells of peanut busts at Central School, 43; 1929 8th grade photo with Versal and Thelma, **43**. Versal begins school at six, 415, tells about riding in the "school wagon," 415; praises Mrs. West, his first grade teacher 415; advances a half year in school twice, 416; summary of schools attended in St. Anthony, 425; tells of first meeting Thelma in 4th grade, 426, was Thelma's classmate from 6th grade through junior year in high school, 426. Versal drops out of school because needed at ranch, 426; tells of respect for Thelma at school as a teen, 427, tells of Thelma winning high school athletic/academic award all four years of high school, 427.

scouting. Versal begins activity in, 121; teaches scouts to eat onion sandwiches 139 photo of Versal's "Chief Clear Lake" card **139** synopsis of scout activity for twent years, 139; Versal's involvment during St Anthony years, 157, as Logan First Ward scoutmaster 174; eagle scout photo, **174**; Versal's scouting progression described 174 & 439. Klondike camping 178 Explorer Snake River trips 176-177 newspaper articles about river trip, **176-177**; photo of Duane at Camp Hunt, **216**. becomes interested in scouting 435 moves to Logan, Utah, 439 again active in scouting and church in Logan, 439

Seamons, Clayten. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart **456-457**

sheep Versal raises "bum lambs" separated from mothers during annual sheep drive 26

Sheldon, Kara. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart **456-457**

Sheldon, Leah. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**

Shosted, Alice. (see Singleton, Alice Shosted)

Shosted, Frank. separated from Leatha [illegible] Atwater Kent radio to Gould, 18

Shosted, Merlie Ina (see Bowman, Merlie Shosted)

Shosted, Nina. 1918 photo of 4 in 1919 family portrait, **11**; asks boys about dynamite cap, 55 in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**

Shosted, Vera Venice in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**

Schupe, Sister [illegible] photo [illegible]

Simpson, Carolyn. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**

Singleton, Alice Shosted. in 1919 family portrait, **11**; in 1920 photo of Davis family on sleigh, **36**; leads Versal to mailbox and accidently fractures his arm, 43 in 1923 Davis family photo, **54-55**; photo with Blaine, **84** cared by her grandmother to stay living on the ranch after Leatha moved out, 84; Versal and Thelma attend her funeral on way back from Canada expedition in 1979, 261; Versal, Bessie and Trisha visit in 1988, 379; was one of her Grandmother Alice Davis "favorites" an was bribed by her to remain living at her home, 463

Singleton, Blaine. discovers human skeleton while repairing irrigation system, 75, Versal sics dog on, 84 courting Alice Shosted, **84**, 1939 photo with Alice, **84** describes adventures in sand ice caves, 163, Versal, Bessie and Trisha visit in 1988, 379.

Singleton, George. drove the school wagon, 40 owned bull that chased Dutch, 48 helps repair irrigation system, 74

skiing. Versal and Dutch make skis and have fun on ski jumps, 58 drawing of ski jumps, **58**

Skinner, Richard. with Laurin and Versal in 1968 hunting photo, **198**

skunk. Versal releases skunk caught in trap, 191

Smith, Terrel. called as counselor in Logan East Ward bishopric, 249, news photo of bishopric, **249**

Snake River. photo of with [illegible] in background, 73, Versal repairs leaks in lava dam, 74, drawing of river and irrigation system, **74**; Thema tells of jumping off bridge into Snake River and terror when fighting to get back to surface, 462

Snowdon, Lonnie is shown in Alvord family photo, **365**

Snowdon, Sheri Nielson is shown in Alvord family photo, **365**

Sommers, Josephine in 1966 mother daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**

Sommers, Richard. dates Deb, 247

Sommers, Saundra. in 1966 mother daughter Mia Maid class photo, **364**

Spanish Fork, Utah. early [illegible] Gould Davis, 6

Spence, Corette Olsen in 1958 [illegible] photos, **190 & 191**

Spence, Derek [illegible] when he is dying, at Upper Valley Nursing Center, 487 [illegible] **456-457**

Spence, Devan [illegible] when he is dying, at Upper Valley Nursing Center, 487 [illegible] **456-457**

Spence, Katie [illegible] **456-457**

Spence, Kierra [illegible] **456-457**

Spence, Gary Dean [illegible] **456-457**

Spence, Trevor. in 1977 ace mill employee photo, **264**; visits the great grandpa Davis often as he is living in Upper Valley Nursing Center, 387; visits at Versal and Thelma's 50th anniversary party, 456-457.

Squires, Norman. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, 172.

St. Anthony Canal. drawing showing location of, **12**; Versal and friends have chickoree at swimming hole, 58.

St. Anthony Canal home. destroyed by fire, 4; photo of well head, **4**; Versal watches home burn, 4; drawing showing location of, **12**; burned in 1918, 12; watching its home burn, first childhood memory, 413. *See* Anthony Canal home.

St. Anthony Fire Department. described during 1950s, 152; photo of volunteer firemen, **152**; photo of Versal's voluteer fireman's badge, **152**; photo of old fire truck, **153**; Versal writes of experiences as volunteer fireman, 438.

St. Anthony First Ward. Versal attends as youth and newly wed, 70; meets in upstairs section of Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle, 70; photo of tabernacle, 70.

St. Anthony home. photos of, **149**; purchased in April 1947, 147; photo after elk hunt, **161**; shown on map, **168-169**.

St. Anthony Hospital. Twila and Tami born there, 158; photo of, 158; shown on map, **168-169**.

St. Anthony, Idaho. describes rivalry between "southsiders" and "northsiders," 41; map showing north and south division in St. Anthony, **41**; map of, **168-169**.

St. Anthony Second Ward. Thelma attends before marriage, 70.

St. Anthony Third Ward. attended by Davises when living in St. Anthony, 156; photo of home used as church house, **156**; drawing showing layout of church, **156**; Versal and Thelma become more active in church while members, 157; shown on map, **168-169**.

St. George Temple. photo of, **88**; Versal inscribes his and Thelma's names in cliff overlooking, 88.

St. Anthony Ward. Versal blessed in, 3.

Stoddard, Marion. in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**.

Stone, O. Leslie. speaks at Logan Temple dedicatory services, 264.

Sundust Clan. Versal and Thelma proselyte, 307.

Sundust, Imogene (matriarch of Sundust clan). teacher in all-Indian Presbyterian Church, 310; Thelma described first meeting with, 310; is admired by Thelma, 310; discussions end when Davises have to return to Utah, 311.

Sundust, Perry (Maricopa Indian leader, tribal council representative). allows Versal to speak at wake, 306; is a political leader, 310; invites Davises to dance at Chicken Scratch community party, 317.

Sundust, Ray. (vice-chairman of PeePosh Cummunity Council), 317.

Sundust, Rae Jean. in McMillan family photo, **286**; baptized, 299; photo on baptism day, **299**; sealed as family in May 1985, 321; in photo with Davises on day of departure from mission, 320; sealed as family in Mesa Temple, 342; in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**.

Sunn, Nick (Maricopa Indian leader). present at Indian wake, 306; offers prayere at community meeting, 321.

Sunn, Vernita. assists Versal and Thelma in creating comprehensive map of the Maricopa colony, 285.

Swainston, Albert. in 1919 family portrait, **11**.

Swainston, Henry. was Merlie's first husband, 11.

Swensen, Mildred. in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**.

swimming holes. drawing shows locations of, **34**; Thelma tells of jumping off bridge into Snake River and terror when fighting to get back to surface, 462.

Swings Department Store. Floyd works there, 14.

T

tarantulas. common on reservation, 298.

telephone (early wind-up). described, 18.

Thorne, Kip. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Thorne, Sandra. played in tree house, 202.

Thorpe, Everett. painted "Miracle of the Gulls" painting featured in Logan First Ward chapel, 248; photo of painting, **248**.

Thurston, Brodie. photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Thurston, Kent. photo in Versal and Thelma four-generation chart, **456-457**.

Thurston, Jayli Jo. listed in Versal and Thelma's four generation chart, **456-457**.

Transport Motor Company. Versal employed there, 171; newspaper article announcing Versal as Service Manager, **172**; co-worker steals tools, 172.

Tuckett, Mr. mentored Versal as a teen in ward choir, 326.

tumors (Davis family). Deb begins lifelong battle with Davis family tumors, 243; photo showing affects of Deb's first tumor surgery, **243**; genetic tumors explained and affected family members listed, 244.

Turley, Kent E. meets and counsels with Versal and Thelma following string of burglaries, 304; counsels Davises to change mission emphasis from welfare services to proselyting, 307; photo of, **312**; attends the Maricopa Branch Conference and calls it the "Maricopa Twig," 312; expresses full support, 312; calls for stake-wide fast in behalf of Maricopa twig, 312.

Turner, Billy. story of rescue from frozen canal by Gould, 9.

Twin Groves Bridge. scene of 1927 ice gorge tragedy, 20-23; photos of **23**.

U

V

Venice Dance Hall. Versal and Dutch steal soda from, 56; Versal tends race horse at, 57; drawing of Versal and horse at Venice Dance Hall, **57**.

vinegar fizz. described, 19.

Virgin, Fern. included in Alaska excursions summary, 209; 1984 Alaska sightseeing trip outlined, 224-229; in 1984 Alaska photos, **224-229**; goes on 1983 aborted trip to Alaska with Davises, 345; photo with Davises, **345**; go on second Alaska trip with Davises, 350.

Virgin, Oliver. with Versal when he was cited by game warden during Yellowstone fishing trip, 108.

Virgin, Wendell. included in Alaska excursions summary, 209; 1984 Alaska sightseeing trip outlined, 224-229; in 1984 Alaska photos, **224-229**; goes on aborted 1983 trip to Alaska with Davises, 345; photo with Davises, **345**; goes deep sea fishing with Davises, 346; go on second Alaska trip with Davises, 350.

W

Warnburg, Eva. in 1945 potato harvesting crew photo, **111**.

Watkins, Brother and Sister. (missionaries who replaced Davises in Maricopa Indian Branch). in group photo at Mesa Temple, **342**.

Wayman, Sister. assists ward member who has heart attack and collapses in church, 249.

Webb, Julia. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Welch, Ed. weened from coffee during deer hunt, 159; photo of, **159**.

Welfare Services Mission. Thelma and Versal's call to serve one, 274; description of, 274; encouraged to teach how to do things rather than doing it for them, 291; Versal list activities used to teach independence and new skills, 292; photo of list, **292**.

West, Dr. W. B. Versal named after, 3.

West, Mrs. (Versal's first grade teacher). Versal expresses gratitude for giving him a good start in school, 415.

White, LaWana Davis in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, 327.

White, Terry. in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, 327.

Williams, Russ. in photo of Ace Mill Employees, **185**;

Winterholler, Linda. in newspaper photo about Logan Stake Dance Festival, **172**.

Winward, Woodrow. in news article about Explorer river trips, **177**.

wolf. Mom's encounter with in Alaska, 220.

wood burning stove. use in heating and cooking in ranch home described, 98.

World War II. Versal describes uncertainty during, 117; photo of news headline when war declared, **118**; farmer determent status described, 122; photo of Versal's draft card, **122**; war rationing and restrictions described, 125; war poster, **125**; Thelma describes war rationing, 127; photos of wartime pages in farm record book, **128**; newspaper headlines when War was over, **134**; description of euphoria when war ended, 134;

soldier accidentally drowns at Island Park Reservoir, 135; explains his war classification, 434; Thelma assists with farming and cattle especially during war years, 432; St. Anthony's "Vets Units" described, 465.

Wright, Bernice Caplinger Olsen. in 1919 family portrait, **11**; sets Versal up with his first date with Thelma, 86; 1934 July 4th photo with friends, **86**; in 1941 extended Davis family photo, **117**; in 1942 photo on banks of Snake River, **122**; Versal's optimistic letter to her following his radiation treatment for prostate cancer, 323; photo of **324**; in photo of graveside service for Carol Davis Elvin, **327**; Versal, Bessie and Trisha visit in 1988, 379; Versal describes Bessie's startled awakening at Bernice's house by a rude, red rooster, 381; in photo with Versal and Bessie, **381**; passes away on 11 Sept. 1988; 381; sets Versal up on his first date with Thelma, 427.

Wright, Farrell. Bernice Olsen's boyfriend, 86; 1934 July 4th photo with friends, **86**; photo of bagged potatoes in his field, **110**; in 1941 extended Davis family photo, **117**; reaction on Dec. 7, 1942 when war declared, 118; in 1942 photo on banks of Snake River, **122**; Davises return to visit in 1983, 321.

Wright, Vard. collects Indian artifacts in Upper Snake River Valley, photo of, **75**.

Wyberg, Rod. in photo of Ace Mill Employees, **185**; in 1977 photo of Ace Mill employees, **253**.

X

Y

Yellowstone Park. family fishing trips to, viii; Twila tells of learning how to fish there, viii; 1958 photo in Yellowstone Park, **viii**; 1962 photo fishing, **ix**; Versal & Thelma's 1940 weeklong trip with friends, 106; photos of weeklong trip, **106 & 107**; fishing for seagulls in Yellowstone, 186; photos of shop fishing trip to Yellowstone, **186**.

Yellowstone Stake Genealogy Committee. sponsor celebration to honor Gould and Alice's 50th wedding anniversary, 119.

Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle. St. Anthony First Ward meets in upstairs section of Yellowstone Stake Tabernacle, 70; photo of tabernacle, **70**; shown on map, **168-169**.

Yukon River. 1974 float down outlined, 218-222; photos of, **218-222**.

Z

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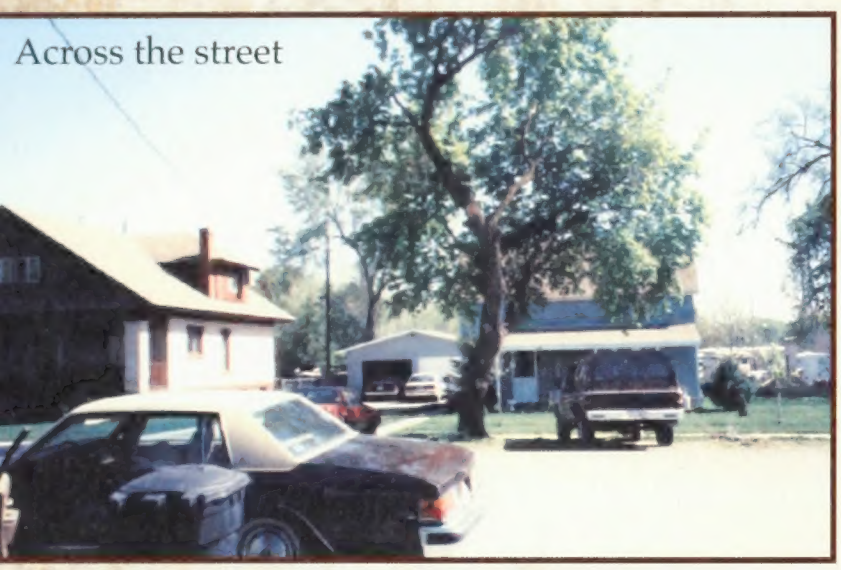
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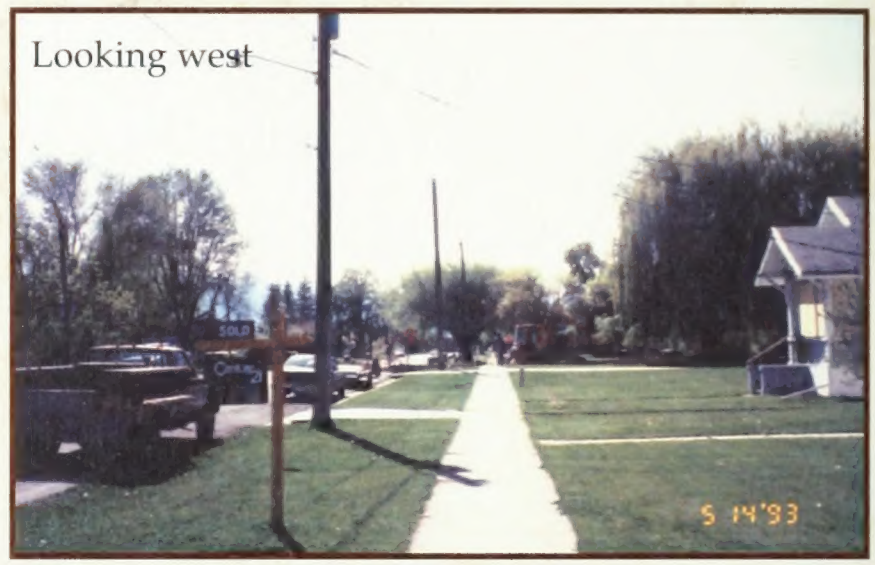
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Versal LaVel Davis : his flashbacks & more /
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During the last decade of his life Versal LaVel Davis recorded many of his life's memories in what he called "Flashbacks." They were typed and distributed to his children during his lifetime in bulky binders. Today most of those binders are falling apart, making their usefulness to future generations problematic.

To help preserve Versal's written legacy, his daughter, Twila Davis Bird, has taken his Flashbacks and combined them with journal entries, letter excerpts, and other recorded materials authored by Versal and his wife, Thelma Hall Davis, to create the core of this biography. The addition of her own reminiscences and those of other family members add further depth and detail. Also included is Versal's thirty-nine page, handwritten autobiography, which he completed in 1987. Supplementary audio and video recordings, which accompany this volume, memorialize the voice, movement, and personalities of Versal, Thelma, their children, and others who were fortunate enough to share their world. The resulting compilation is a sincere effort to chronicle the life of a man revered and loved by those who knew him.